



**UNIVERSITY OF OSLO**  
***INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, CONSERVATION AND HISTORY***

Dissertation for the degree of Master of Arts:

# **Norwegian Kingship Transformed: the Succession and Coronation of Magnus Erlingsson**



(Depiction of Magnus Erlingsson, by Gerhard Munthe, 1899)

Thomas Malo Tollefsen  
Spring 2015



## **Abstract**

This dissertation is an exploration of the succession and coronation of Magnus Erlingsson based upon three themes: Norwegian kingship in theory, Norwegian kingship in practise, and Norwegian kingship in context, and a search for points of similarity and contrast with European trends.

In the first theme the focus of the analysis will be the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, exploring this in two parts: the rules of kingmaking and the narration of Snorre in the *Saga of Magnus Erlingsson*, and motivations behind the coronation.

In the second theme the focus will again be on the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson. First, this dissertation attempts to put together a workable timeline from when Magnus is acclaimed king in 1161 to his coronation in either 1163 or 1164. Then the analysis shifts to the coronation itself, before it falls on the coronation oath and the *Letter of Privileges* to see what they can tell us about Magnus's kingship, and the *Law of Succession* and what it meant for the future.

In the third theme this dissertation attempts to contextualise Magnus's kingship and this chapter will focus on two things: acquisition, and by extension how to legitimise your rule once it has been acquired, and succession to kingship. This will be achieved by looking for similarities in two kingdoms of great importance to Norway in this period, namely England and France.

Finally, this dissertation concludes that Magnus's succession and coronation, in a Norwegian context, is exceptional. In a European context Magnus's kingship appears to fit into the trends of the times.

# Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Abbreviations .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>7</b>
Background and Historiography .....	7
What I am going to do .....	8
Primary Sources.....	9
<b>Theme One: Norwegian Kingship in theory .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Introduction .....	11
The rules of kingmaking .....	11
Possible motivations for the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson.....	28
<b>Theme Two: Norwegian Kingship in practice .....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction .....	34
Timeline and dating the coronation .....	34
The Coronation of King Magnus.....	43
<b>Theme Three: Norwegian Kingship in context .....</b>	<b>62</b>
Introduction .....	62
Acquisition of kingship in England and France 1059 to 1189 .....	63
Legitimising kingship.....	67
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>81</b>
Primary sources .....	81
Secondary sources .....	82
Online sources .....	91

## Abbreviations

<i>DRHH</i>	Saxo Grammaticus <i>Danorum Regum Heromque Historia</i> , ed. Frederik Winkel Horn (København, 1898) <a href="http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar_den_store">http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar_den_store</a>
<i>Fsk.</i>	<i>Ágrip af Nóregskonunga sögum: Fagrskinna – Nóregs konunga tal</i> , ed., Bjarni Einarsson (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1985)
<i>Hkr.</i>	Sturluson, Snorri, <i>Heimskringla: History of the Kings of Norway</i> , tr. Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001)
<i>HkrHH</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of Harald Fairhair, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>HkrHHard</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of Harald Sigurdsson Hardrada, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>HkrHHerd</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of Hákon the Broadshouldered, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>HkrInge</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of the Sons of Harald, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>HkrME</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of Magnus Erlingsson, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>HkrOT</i>	<i>Heimskringla</i> , Saga of Olav Tryggvason, <i>ibid.</i>
Howden, <i>Gesta</i>	Roger of Howden, <i>Gesta Regis Henrici secundi et Gesta Regis Ricardi primi</i> , ed. William Stubbs, (London: Longman, 1867)
<i>Msk.</i>	<i>Morkinskinna: The earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030-1157)</i> , tr., Theodore M. Anderson and Kari Ellen Gade (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000)
<i>NMD</i>	<i>Norske Middelalderdokumenter</i> , ed, Sverre Bagge, Knut Helle, and Synnøve Holstad Smedsdal (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1973)
<i>NMD, Oath</i>	‘Kong Magnus Erlingssons kroningsed’, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>NMD, Priv.</i>	‘Privilegiebrev fra kong Magnus Erlingsson for Den norske kirke’, <i>ibid.</i>
<i>NMD, Succ.</i>	‘Kong Magnus Erlingssons tronfølgelov’, <i>ibid.</i>

- Ork* *The Orkneyinga saga*, ed., A. B. Taylor (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1938)
- OrkERK* *Orkneyinga saga*, Saga of Earl Ragnvald Kali, *ibid.*
- Sv.s.* *Sverrissaga: The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, ed. J. Sephton (London: David Nutt, 1899)

# Introduction

## Background and Historiography

Traditionally the unification of Norway into one kingdom is believed to have happened when Harald the Fairhair won the Battle of Hafrsfjord in 872. Harald is of interest to us in this context because he instituted a new law: “[...] he bestowed the title of “king” on all his sons and put this into the laws that each of his descendants was to inherit a kingdom after his father [...]”<sup>1</sup> Legitimacy was not an issue and this would have dire consequence for the kingdom.

The law by Harald the Fairhair caused an issue because it meant that all male descendants had a legitimate claim on the throne. Up until 1130 it was not uncommon for several rulers to share the kingship but for the next 110 years, from 1130 to 1240, twenty-four people would name themselves king.

A change came in 1157, however, when upon the death of one king the remaining followers elected a ten-year-old boy named Håkon as their new leader and figurehead. This election represents a clear change. No longer did the warring parties simply spring up around a king or a pretender, but now they stayed together even after the fall of their leader and they elected a new figurehead for what was a ready-made and organised faction. Good examples of these warring factions that emerged in the late 12<sup>th</sup> Century are the Birkebeiner (so called because they wrapped the bark of the birch tree around their legs) and the Bagler (named after the Norse *bagall* from Latin *baculum* meaning crosier in English).

In 1161 Håkon and his followers succeeded in killing his rival King Inge in battle. After his death Inge’s followers gathered and elected as their new figurehead, Magnus son of Erling. Erling Skakke was one of the most prominent leaders of Inge’s faction. Now with the title of Earl, he became the real leader of the faction and the kingdom. The following year they killed Håkon and the year after that another rival to the throne was captured and killed. The actions of Erling and the rest of his party upon the election of Magnus as their leader was a radical one; it broke with one, if not the, traditional principle of who might become king. Magnus was not the son of a king, and as the law of Harald the Fairhair stated that only sons of kings could become a king, Magnus had no legitimate claim on the throne. To compensate for Magnus’s

---

<sup>1</sup> *HkrHH*, Ch. 33 p. 87

short coming the faction, led by his father Erling, entered into an alliance with the Church and the newly erected archdiocese. Together they introduced a new criterion: the king should henceforth be of legitimate birth. Inge had, Magnus was, but every other pretender was born out of wedlock. The alliance with the Church proved to be one of the most important assets to the faction. In 1163 Magnus was anointed and crowned king of Norway, the first king to be so in all of Scandinavia. It is the succession and coronation of Magnus and their implications for the kingship that is the focus of this dissertation.

This topic has, in the past, been discussed almost exclusively by Norwegian historians, in Norwegian, which is not a world language. For instance, Professor Sverre Bagge has written much about the state formation period in Norway in his *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway c. 900-1350* published in 2010, as has Professor Knut Helle in *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319* from 1964. More recently Professor Hans Jacob Orning has written about the role of the Norwegian king in the High Middle Ages. Furthermore, most of the work that has been done by historians on the coronation of Magnus was done in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, and there have been significant advances in research on related topics and methodology since then. In addition, the discussion on this topic has always centred around two theories: whether the coronation was the result of foreign influence, or home-grown influence. The intention here has been to look at this topic with fresh eyes and to explore the validity of these theories.

## **What I am going to do**

This dissertation will be divided into three main themes each equivalent to one chapter:

Theme one: How does Norwegian kingship work in theory? The focus of the analysis will be the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, exploring this in two parts. The first part will examine the rules surrounding the making of a king in Norway as portrayed by the narrative sources, especially Snorre's Snorre's portrayal of a conversation between Erling Skakke and Archbishop Eystein because he raises many interesting points and arguments which by answering can be used to answer the overarching question of this chapter. The second part will look at the possible motivations behind the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson.



Theme two: How does Norwegian kingship work in practice? Again, the focus on the analysis here will rest on the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson and how events played out according to the sources. First, this chapter attempts to assemble a workable timeline from when Magnus was acclaimed king in Bergen in 1161 to his coronation in that same place in either 1163 or 1164. Then, the analysis focuses on the extent to which it is possible to piece together how the coronation of Magnus would have played out. Finally, the focus falls on the coronation oath and the *Letter of Privileges* from King Magnus to the Norwegian Church, to see what they can tell us about Magnus's kingship, and the *Law of Succession* and what it meant for the future.

Theme three: How does Norwegian kingship work in context of other European kingdoms? There are many ways for us to contextualise Magnus's kingship and in this chapter the focus will be on two things: acquisition, and by extension how to legitimise your rule once it has been acquired, and succession to kingship. In chapter two, the focus was on explaining how Erling and Eystein attempted to legitimise the newly acquired kingship of Magnus Erlingsson and securing the succession for his descendants. This chapter, however, will look for similarities in two kingdoms of great importance to Norway in this period, namely England and France.

The scope of this dissertation is therefore thematically limited to coronation and what makes a king within the framework of medieval kingship and contemporary ideology concerning kings. Geographically it is limited first to the medieval kingdom of Norway then to Western Europe. Chronologically it is limited to the twelfth century, and primarily the reign of Magnus Erlingsson

## **Primary Sources**

The most important sources at the scholar's disposal for this topic are the Sagas, among them *Heimskringla*, *Fagrskinna*, *Morkinskinna*, and *Sverre's saga*. Some of these sagas are what is known as contemporary sagas; the author tells of events from his own time or he can at least base it on contemporary writings, or oral accounts, written or told by people who experienced the events in question. For instance, the Saga of Magnus Erlingsson in *Heimskringla* states that Jon Loptsson, Snorre's foster-father, was present at the coronation of Magnus.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 21 p. 805

Most scholars reckon that the Kings' sagas from 1130s onwards are either based upon the contemporary sagas or is a contemporary saga in its own. This is also held to be true with later compilations such as *Ágrip af Nóregs konunga sögum*, *Morkinskinna*, *Fagrskinna*, *Flateyjarbók*, *Fríssbók*, and *Heimskringla*; most likely they have all told of events leading up to battle of Re in 1177, but the end is missing from *Ágrip* and *Morkinskinna*. The period following the battle of Re is also depicted in the historically most valuable sagas of the Norwegian kings, *Sverre's saga*, compiled after 1214 and *Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, dated to the 1260s. The period between those two compilations is covered by the saga known as *Boglanda sogur* (Bagli sagas). Norwegian history from 1130 to 1263 is, in other words, treated more or less coherently in the remaining contemporary sagas. Information about Norwegian events can also be found outside Norway. For instance, from Denmark we have Saxo Grammaticus and his *Gesta Danorum*, which can be used to assemble a timeline for the first few years of Magnus's reign. From England, we have the work of Roger of Howden called *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi et Gesta Regis Ricardi Primi*, which also aids the timeline of events.

In addition to these narrative sources, there are also primary sources such as the coronation oath, the *Letter of Privileges*, and the *Law of Succession*, which have been used to analyse specific aspects of Magnus's kingship. Similarly, to place Magnus's kingship and events in a European context, contemporary and near contemporary examples of both narrative and governmental records have been used in the analysis, including the submission of King John to Pope Innocent III in 1213, the coronation charters of Stephen and Henry I, and saints' lives.

The historical value of each of the primary sources will be discussed fully in relation to specific topics, events and points explored in the chapters.

This dissertation, then, is an exploration of the themes outlined above in the context of Norwegian kingship and a search for points of similarity and contrast with European trends.

# Theme One: Norwegian Kingship in theory

## Introduction

This chapter explores the first of the three themes outlined in the introduction: how Norwegian kingship worked in theory. The focus of the analysis will be the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, exploring this in two parts: The first part will examine the rules surrounding the making of a king in Norway as portrayed by the narrative sources, whilst the second part will look at the possible motivations behind the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, centred, in particular, on the exchange between Earl Erling Skakke and Archbishop Eystein as written down by Snorri in the *Saga of Magnus Erlingsson*.

## The rules of kingmaking

‘If it is so that Magnus was not chosen king according to ancient custom in our land, then you can with your authority give him the crown according to God’s law and anoint him for the royal power. And though I may not be king or of the royal race, yet most of the kings I remember did not know the laws and customs of the land as well as I. But King Magnus’ mother is a king’s daughter and lawfully begotten, thus Magnus is a queen’s son and the son of a lawful wife. And if you will consecrate him king, then no one may later depose him. William the Bastard was not a king’s son, yet he was consecrated and crowned king of England, and the royal power has remained in his line in England, and all have been crowned. Svein Ulfsson of Denmark was not a king’s son, yet he was crowned king, and his sons after him, and each of his successors in that line was crowned king. There is now in our land an archiepiscopal see. That is a great honour and a glory for our country. Let us increase its dignity even more with gifts, and let us have a crowned king as have Englishmen and Danes.’<sup>3</sup>

So portrays Snorre a conversation between Erling and Eystein that according to the saga took place in Bergen either in 1163 or in 1164. The account raises a number of interesting points and arguments. The first thing of interest to discuss concerns what these ‘ancient customs’ might have been. It seems likely that they refer to the ancient custom by which the kings of Norway had acceded to the kingship, better known as *Konungstekja*.<sup>4</sup> In the original text the words used by Erling are ‘konungs tekinn’. ‘Konungs’ is the genitive form of *konungr* (king) so it should be translated as ‘king’s’, while ‘tekinn’ means *ta* (take) and with the right ending it would be ‘taking’ – the

---

<sup>3</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 21 pp. 806-807

<sup>4</sup> Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900-1350*, (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010), p. 169

translation of ‘konungs tekinn’ could therefore be or ‘king’s taking/king-taking’. This is a translation that fits the description of the act of *konungstekja* as described below.

*Konungstekja* seems to have been a custom where, upon succession to throne through election, the new king was acclaimed. The first example of this can be found in the *Saga of Olav Tryggvason* where it states: ‘In the general assembly in Trondheim, Olaf Tryggvason was chosen king over all the land, as Harald Fairhair had been’.<sup>5</sup> The general assembly the saga talks about is the *Øreting* assembly, which held a particular status when it came to royal elections.<sup>6</sup> The kin-right held by all kings’ sons meant that they held an equal right to inherit and could bring their claim before the assemblies. It was then left to the assembly to accept or reject the claim made by the petitioner by electing him. Acceptance by the assembly, which represented the people’s voice, gave legitimacy to the king.<sup>7</sup>

Kingship in medieval times rested on the consent of a king’s subjects. There could be no succession to the kingship, even in the context of usurped rule, without some recognition of the king’s fitness to rule or an election by parts of the community or the making of promises to uphold law and custom. In general any important exercise of government involved consultation. The king was subject to the authority of law and custom, and the dependence of custom on the community that adhered to it meant that government was contractual and collective, at least implicitly, and representative too, because consultation and consent were frequently required long before theories of representation were articulated. A king could find his authority questioned if he acted tyrannically, was negligent, or ineffective.<sup>8</sup>

At first glance *Konungstekja* seems to have been an elaborate and complicated affair. As an act, *konungstekja* is the traditional ritual for the accession to the throne. It symbolises the king’s instalment by the people. Two prominent members of the

---

<sup>5</sup> *HkrOT*, Ch. 51 p. 193

<sup>6</sup> Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 2010, p. 40; Knut Helle, ‘The Norwegian kingdom: succession disputes and consolidation’ in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, Vol. 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 370

<sup>7</sup> Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages: Translated with an introduction by S. B. Chrimes*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), p. 12; Jon Vidar Sigurdsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet: Vikingen, kongen, erkebiskopen og bonden*, (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2008), p. 27; This was done to ensure a continuation of Harald’s realm and so that his successor could claim the same overlordship as he had

<sup>8</sup> D. E. Luscombe, ‘Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west’ in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c.1450*, ed., J. H. Burns, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 163

assembly lifting the king up to an elevated chair did this, so that everyone present could see him.<sup>9</sup> As pointed out by Bagge, this ritual is described in the *Hirðskrá*, which, of course, is problematic as it was written down in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century by order of King Magnus VI. The earliest extant copies of the text we have, AM 322 fol. and NkS 1642 4to, dates to around 1300. And of the three manuscripts that gives us the main text of *Heimskringla*, the best one, called *Kringla*, was written twenty years after Snorri's death in 1241.<sup>10</sup> That is, about 140 years after the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson. Consequently, it is difficult to know the extent to which what the saga author describes is the same as what *Hirðskrá* describes.

The simplicity of the *konungstekja* as an act contrasts starkly with the way the royal succession worked. Kingship in Scandinavia as everywhere else grew out of a concentration of power, and the increased wealth caused by the raiding in continental Europe is thought to be one of the reasons for this concentration. What separates the kings from the chieftains is outlined in *Rígsthula*.<sup>11</sup> It describes a humanity divided into three "classes" by the actions of the god Heimdall, where the youngest of the earl's twelve sons are bequeathed exceptional powers, such as the ability to blunt sword edges, calm the sea and the strength of eight men.<sup>12</sup> All of which are powers his father, the chieftain, does not have. In the end, the youngest son Kon usurps his father's rule, thereby becoming the first king. Two dynasties in Norway claimed such divine origins: the Yngling-dynasty and the earls of Lade.<sup>13</sup> Traditionally, the first king of Norway was Harald Fairhair of the Yngling or Fairhair dynasty. According to Snorre, since Harald Fairhair's time succession rights had been granted to all royal sons, regardless of their legitimacy.<sup>14</sup> Clearly this custom poses a problem if a king sires multiple sons with an equal right to succeed him when he dies, and we know that it

---

<sup>9</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 169

<sup>10</sup> *Hkr.*, Introduction p. xxii

<sup>11</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 144; Sigurdsson, *Den norrøne samfunnet*, p. 19. See Sigurdsson, *ibid*, p. 19 for a discussion about *Rígsthulas* dating.

<sup>12</sup> Sigurdsson, *Den norrøne samfunnet*, p. 19

<sup>13</sup> Sigurdsson, *Den norrøne samfunnet*, pp. 29-30. Sigurdsson further points out that those two were not the only dynasties to claim divine origins

<sup>14</sup> *HkrHH.*, Ch. 33 p.87; *Hkr.* lists 18 sons from various relationships: *HkrHH.*, Ch. 17 p. 73, Ch. 20 p. 76, Ch. 21 p. 76, and Ch. 25 p. 80.

had indeed resulted in the numerous wars between rivals that plagued the Norwegian kingdom in this early period.<sup>15</sup>

Magnus could not claim descent through the custom described above, as Erling told Eystein '[Magnus was not] of the royal race.'<sup>16</sup> Magnus was the matrilineal grandson of a king, that is, he was descended from a royal daughter rather than a son. History is, of course, rife with men who succeeded to positions they were otherwise not entitled to. In a European context, Magnus' succession had many precedents. Perhaps the most famous, and also contemporary, example is King Henry II, sometimes known as FitzEmpress, who inherited the English crown through his mother, Empress Matilda, daughter of King Henry I. Moreover, it is clear that the 'custom' as described by Snorre is not entirely accurate. Krag has pointed out that it was not until the accession of King Harald Hardrada in the eleventh century that historians can begin to talk about a stable dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Though Hardrada's predecessors claimed to be descendants of Harald Fairhair, their lineage is questionable at best.<sup>18</sup> The *Saga of Harald Hardrada* only traces his lineage to his father and (half)-brother.<sup>19</sup> The view held by most scholars today is that the Fairhair-dynasty ended with Harald Greyfell in 976, and Sjöström finds it very unlikely that the father of Sigurd Syr is the same Halvdan as the Halvdan in Hadeland who was a grandson of Harald Fairhair.<sup>20</sup> As such, an argument can therefore be made that the accession of Harald Hardrada established a new dynasty. Joan Turville-Petre holds that Harald Hardrada's connection to Harald Fairhair is a reconstruction carried out after his death, 'as he [Harald Fairhair] was their political forerunner, so also he must be their common ancestor.'<sup>21</sup> Therefore, if we are to follow that line of reasoning to the end, the true Fairhair-dynasty only

---

<sup>15</sup> Claus Krag, 'The early unification of Norway' in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia volume 1: Prehistory to 1520*, ed., Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 189-191; Hans Jacob Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen – en revurdering', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 93 (2014), p. 203; William Chester Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 243

<sup>16</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 pp. 806

<sup>17</sup> Claus Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', p. 185

<sup>18</sup> Sverre Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 165; Claus Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', p. 185

<sup>19</sup> *HkrHHard.*, Ch. 1 p. 577; Claus Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', p. 191

<sup>20</sup> Claus Krag, 'The early unification of Norway', p. 191; M. Sjöström, 'Scandinavian medieval descendants of Charlemagne: A detailed genealogy of the issue of Agnes Haakonsdottir, of the so-called Fairhair dynasty', *Foundations - Journal of the Foundation for Medieval Genealogy* vol 2 (2007), pp. 253-276

<sup>21</sup> Joan Turville-Petre, 'The Genealogist and History: Ari to Snorri' in *Saga-book vol. XX. The Viking Society for Northern Research*. University College London 1978-1981, p. 15

reigned for about forty years, with Olav Tryggvason and St. Olav having their lineages re-connected in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. This means that as many as six different dynasties have been banded together under the title of the Fairhair-dynasty: Harald Fairhair's, Olav Tryggvason's, St. Olav's, Harald Hardrada's, Magnus Erlingsson's, and Sverre's.<sup>22</sup> They have all retrospectively been restructured as belonging to the Fairhair-dynasty, according to Turville-Petre's line of reasoning. There is a widely held belief today that the Fairhair-dynasty is at least partially a product of medieval invention.<sup>23</sup> The line of kings from Harald Hardrada in 1066 to Magnus the Blind in 1135 is indisputably an unbroken one. It is therefore safe to assume that Magnus Erlingsson's mother was a member of the so-called Hardrada-dynasty, which would also make Magnus a cognatic member of the same dynasty. But that did not make him the sole candidate for the kingship when King Inge died, as we will explore now.

So when King Inge died, in 1161, there was no obvious candidate.<sup>24</sup> First they turned to his immediate family, in this case, that of his sisters and nephew, and half-brothers. But, when Jón Hallkelsson, who might have been Simon's brother and therefore Nikolas's uncle, said no, so they looked to the next candidate:

‘Then they asked the Nikolás Skjaldvararson, the sister son of King Magnus Barelegs, if he wished to be the leader of their forces [i.e. king]. He answered to this effect, that it would be his advice to elect as king a person descended from the royal house, and to let that man who had the necessary qualifications for that task be leader of their forces, because then it would be easier to collect an army.’<sup>25</sup>

Nikolas Skjaldvararson was the son Sigurd Ranesson and Skjaldvor Brynjolsdatter, a half-sister of King Magnus Barelegs. It is interesting to note here that he is known by a matronymic ‘Skjaldvarsson’ rather than the patronymic ‘Sigurdsson’, almost consistently whenever he is mentioned in the sagas.<sup>26</sup> He had connections to both the royal house and old chieftain families. His father came from a landed family from Steigen on Engeløya in Hålogaland, and had been a landed man under Kings Magnus

---

<sup>22</sup> Jo Rune Ugulen, ‘Kongar i dei norske ættetavlene’, Norsk Slektshistorisk Forening 1999/2000, reprinted from *Genealogen* 99.1, pp. 20-23

<sup>23</sup> Birgit and Peter Sawyer *Medieval Scandinavia: from Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993, p. 61; Claus Krag, ‘The early unification of Norway’, p. 185

<sup>24</sup> Halvdan Koht, ‘Hendinggang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177’, *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 40 (1960), p. 233

<sup>25</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>26</sup> *HkrHHerd.*, Ch. 7 pp. 772-773; Ch. 11 p. 777; *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789; Ch. 17 p. 802; Ch. 18 p. 803; Ch. 38 pp. 816-818; Ch. 39 p. 817; Ch. 40 pp. 817-818

Barelegs, Eystein, and Sigurd the Crusader.<sup>27</sup> From the moment he switched sides from Håkon the Broadshouldered to King Inge he remained loyal to first King Inge and then to Erling and King Magnus<sup>28</sup>. As we saw just a short moment ago, he was the one who first pointed to Erling Skakke and Magnus when they debated over whom they should choose as king.<sup>29</sup>

‘They inquired of Árni, the husband of Queen Ingiríth, if it was acceptable to have one of his sons, brothers of King Ingi, elected king.’<sup>30</sup>

Arne Ivarsson was a landed man from Ståreim, son of Ivar Sunesson and an unknown mother, who, allegedly, was the godfather of Magnus Erlingsson and one his closest advisors.<sup>31</sup> He was married to Queen Ingerid, mother of King Inge the Hunchback. Ingerid was the daughter of the Swedish King Ragnvald Ingesson and an unknown mother. She had been married three times before by the time she married Arne, her second marriage was to King Harald Gille and it was that union that had produced King Inge the Hunchback. According to Thuesen, many historians have regarded her as a “loose-woman” who passed from magnate to magnate. At the same time she was also supposed to possess political acumen, she was the one that orchestrated the election of Inge as king.<sup>32</sup> We know that the marriage between Arne and Ingerid produced four children: Inge Arnesson (b. c.1148), Nikolaus Arnesson (b. c.1150), who was to go on to, become bishop first in Stavanger and then in Oslo. Even later he was to become one of the founders of the Bagler-party in struggle with Magnus’s successor Sverre Sigurdsson. Filip Arnesson (b. c.1152), and Margrethe Arnesdotter (b. c.1154), who was twice married, first to Bjorn Bukk and then to Simon Kåresson, the latter marriage produced Fillipus Simonsson who was the last king of Norway from the Bagler-party.<sup>33</sup>

The question now is which one of Arne’s three sons they wanted. All three of them were underage. The natural choice would be Inge as he was the closest living relative of the late King Inge. This is how events played out according to Snorre:

---

<sup>27</sup> Knut Peter Lyche Arstad (2009.13.02) ‘Nikolas Skjaldvorsson’, *Norsk biografisk leksikon* [https://nbl.sn1.no/Nikolas\\_Skjaldvorsson](https://nbl.sn1.no/Nikolas_Skjaldvorsson) [accessed 2015.11.03]; *HkrME.*, Ch. 38 pp. 816-818

<sup>28</sup> *HkrHHerd.*, Ch. 11 p. 777

<sup>29</sup> Knut Peter Lyche Arstad, ‘Nikolas Skjaldvorsson’

<sup>30</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>31</sup> [http://www.nrk.no/sf/leksikon/index.php/Arne\\_på\\_Stodrheim](http://www.nrk.no/sf/leksikon/index.php/Arne_på_Stodrheim) [accessed 2015.12.03]

<sup>32</sup> Nils Peter Thuesen (2009.13.02), ‘Ingerid Ragnvaldsdatter’, *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, from [https://nbl.sn1.no/Ingerid\\_Ragnvaldsdatter](https://nbl.sn1.no/Ingerid_Ragnvaldsdatter) [accessed 2015.11.03]; *HkrInge.*, Ch. 1 p. 733

<sup>33</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 16 p. 751



‘He answered that the son of Kristín, and daughter son of King Sigurth, was by birth best entitled to be king in Norway. “And,” he said, “he will have with him, for administering the country, a man who is in duty bound to be counsellor both for him and the kingdom; and that is his father Erling, a man wise, determined, much tested in battle, and an excellent ruler. Nor will he fail in this business if [only] luck is on his side.’”<sup>34</sup>

Let us begin by examine the statement that Magnus ‘was by birth best entitled to be king in Norway’, and the best way to do that is to compare him to the other candidates.<sup>35</sup> Nikolas Skjaldvararson seems to have had the weakest claim of the four proposed candidates; his claim is twice ascending and through the cognatic line. His claim is traced through his mother who was the daughter of King Olav Kyrre and half-sister of King Magnus Barelegs, whose reign ended at the turn of the century.

Next is Nikolas Simonsson, who it seems, had the second strongest claim; his is once ascending and through the cognatic line. His claim is traced through his mother to King Harald Gille, which also makes him the first cousin of King Inge the Hunchback, and if it was not for the Arnessons, he might have had the strongest claim, as he would have been the closest living male relative to the recently deceased king; Erling Skakke, apparently though the same. Nikolas Skjaldvorsson was loyal to him through and through, and the only other candidates who could challenge Magnus within the faction was being raised by another raised by another man loyal to Erling. Nikolas Simonsson was a wildcard Erling had no real control over. He had Nikolas killed in the same battle as Håkon the Broadshouldered.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, the strongest claim lay with the sons of Arne and Queen Ingerid. Their claim is traced through their mother to King Inge. As shown by Sjöholm and Sawyer, kinship in the western Nordic area is expressed in grades of genealogical distance. Their claim is not vertical; it is horizontal. True, it is still traced through the cognatic line and it is twice as distant, but the others have to trace their claim twice ascending – first to his mother and then to his grandfather. All of this just shows how complicated the dynastic lines were, and it its this complexity that gives Erling Skakke the opening he need to push Magnus’s claim.

---

<sup>34</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>35</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>36</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 7 p. 795

Regardless of dynastic background, the process described in the saga further makes it likely that Magnus was chosen as king because of who his father was. Erling Skakke Ormsson from Sunnhordaland was the son of Kyrpinga-Orm Sveinsson and Ragnhild, daughter of Sveinki Steinarsson. Kyrpinga-Orm was the son of Svein Sveinsson, who was the son of Erlend of Gerthi, and Ragna, daughter of Earl Orm Eilífsson and Ingibjörg, daughter of Earl Finn Árnason. The mother of Earl Orm was Ragnhild, daughter of Earl Hákon the Powerful. This makes Erling a descendant of both the Earls of Lade and the Arnmødling or Arnung-family and it is perhaps noteworthy that the former dynasty was one of those claiming divine origins along the lines outlined in *Rigsthula*.<sup>37</sup> Magnus' father Erling had married Kristin, the daughter of King Sigurd the Crusader and Malmfrid of Kiev, daughter of Mstislav I of Kiev.<sup>38</sup> Since Magnus was only five years old when he became king, Erling was the *de facto* ruler of the kingdom. Bagge states that Erling is not depicted as a typical or traditional hero, the saga describes him as 'a powerful and resourceful man, an excellent general in times of disturbance, a good and capable ruler.' and 'a man of keen understanding, wealthy and high-born, of great eloquence.'<sup>39</sup> As we can see from this, more emphasis is placed on his mental abilities than on his physical abilities, even though we know from other sources that Erling also went on a crusade.<sup>40</sup> He is portrayed as the cool, cynical and clever general and political leader. When the most important men in the kingdom debated who should succeed King Inge, Erling was described by one of these men as 'a man wise, determined, much tested in battle, and an excellent ruler.'<sup>41</sup> His talents can also be the reason why under his leadership and that of his son, his faction suffered few defections – evidently his fellow faction members trusted his abilities.

Erling must have been close to King Inge, as evidenced by his marriage to Kristin.<sup>42</sup> In fact *Morkinskinna* makes a point out of it, introducing him first as the friend of both Kings Inge and Sigurd Haraldsson, but after Erling's return from the Holy Land the source says that he became closer to King Inge. Why he became closer to King

---

<sup>37</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 751; Sigurdsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet*, pp. 29-30

<sup>38</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 751

<sup>39</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 45; *HkrME.*, Ch. 37 p. 816; *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 752

<sup>40</sup> *Msk.*, Ch. 95 p. 389; *OrkERK.*, Ch. 86 p. 285

<sup>41</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>42</sup> *Msk.*, Ch. 95 p. 389

Inge is difficult for us to discern today, possibly because his brother, Ogmund Dengir, had died while Erling was away.<sup>43</sup> According to *Heimskringla* Erling was not highly thought of whilst his brother was alive, and it also states that of the two brothers he ‘was most inclined to side with Ingi’.<sup>44</sup> The perception of him changed when he returned from the crusade and married Kristin.<sup>45</sup> The *Orkneyinga saga* supports this view, stating that ‘Erling at once threw in his lot with King Ingi, for of the two brothers he was most attached to him; and they did not part so long as they both lived.’<sup>46</sup> In *Heimskringla*, Erling is said to be a ‘man of excellent understanding and a great friend of King Inge.’<sup>47</sup> Erling further created an alliance with the Danish king Valdemar and came to hold Viken, the area around the Oslo Fjord, as his earl. In fact, this alliance would prove to be fruitful to both Erling and Magnus, even after their death, when those who continued to fight Sverre Sigurdsson formed the *Bagler*-party in Denmark.<sup>48</sup> It may also be that this alliance with Denmark is why the author of the saga depicts the election of Magnus as emulating Danish practice.<sup>49</sup> In any case, what is clear from all of this is that Erling was in a significant position to lead the men who were choosing the king. This tells us that while the ancient custom of kings being chosen from a specific bloodline might have been of some importance, so were also political circumstance.

At one point Bagge states, in his discussion about the emerging monarchy, something of particular interest for this discussion: ‘During the internal conflicts from the mid-twelfth century onwards, when a large number of pretenders fought for the throne, no magnate, no matter how powerful he was, claimed the throne for himself, but only members of the dynasty.’<sup>50</sup> What he is saying, and I agree with him on this, is that there were certain magnates, such as Erling Skakke, who clearly held the real power in Norway, but they did not claim the throne. A similar phenomenon happened in Sweden during the time of Birger jarl – clearly the most powerful magnate but never king. There is a clear distinction between those who can be king and those who cannot, regardless of how powerful an individual is.

---

<sup>43</sup> *Msk.*, Ch. 97 p. 392

<sup>44</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 752, Ch. 21 p. 756

<sup>45</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 752

<sup>46</sup> *OrkERK.*, Ch. 89 p. 302

<sup>47</sup> *HkrInge.*, Ch. 17 p. 751

<sup>48</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, pp. 45, 47, 48-49, 56

<sup>49</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 p. 806

<sup>50</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 165

However, when you take what Bagge says and hold it up against the chain of events as it plays across the sagas covering this period, then something seems not quite right. For what are the magnates doing after the death of King Inge if not picking a magnate to lead them? True, they are asking for a son of the dynasty, a ‘mere puppet[s]’ as Bagge calls them. In the period from the death of King Harald Hardrada to the accession of King Magnus Erlingsson ten out of the fifteen people, or two-thirds, who were proclaimed king (including Magnus) were minors (average age was 8,6 years) when they succeeded to the kingship. So to the magnates it could not have mattered that much who the king was. In the saga *Nikolas Skjaldvararson* says as much: ‘elect as king a person descended from the royal house’, then he states ‘let that man who had the necessary qualifications for that task be leader of their forces, because then it would be easier to collect an army.’<sup>51</sup> Medieval kings were expected to show prowess in war, to defend his people – the king’s power thus depended on his ability to recruit and lead armies.<sup>52</sup> It seems certain that when two-thirds of the kings are underage, the true power lies with the magnates anyway.<sup>53</sup> The question then becomes: what is the distinction between kingship and regency?

The distinction lies in the rules applied. We know already that the office of kingship was reserved for one kindred, the descendants of Harald Hardrada, and that the magnates agreed to this when they chose from the descendants of the kings Magnus Barelegs, Harald Gille and Sigurd the Crusader. The regency was in effect the only prize where the magnates could compete. Which is what they did, and Erling won.

Hence, one interpretation of the situation is that the magnates had to choose a new king from amongst the cognatic descendants, but at the same time one of their leading figures possessed such a cognatic descendant. One can question perhaps whether or not Erling was orchestrating a sham performance. In the Middle Ages “election” did not carry the same meaning it has today. By and large “election” meant acknowledgement or acclamation of a candidate already chosen: someone designated – the rest assented and acclaimed. There was no question of free choice, without doubt there was lobbying and discussions, but Brooke argues that before the election

---

<sup>51</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>52</sup> Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages 962-1154*, (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1981), pp. 124, 133

<sup>53</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 46; Christopher Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, p. 124

of anti-King Rudolf of Germany in 1077 “election” essentially meant designation and acclamation – a purely formal process.<sup>54</sup> The reason for having the meeting described in the saga was hence to designate Magnus as the next king. The saga says as much when only after they had all agreed to elect Magnus king, is the assembly summoned.<sup>55</sup>

Firstly, the sagas, apparently, seems to have no qualms about describing Erling’s shrewdness, cynicism, cleverness, his resourcefulness and the fact that he could be cruel and hard.<sup>56</sup> On the surface of things that does sound like a man who sets his eyes on the price and then will stop at nothing to achieve that price.

Secondly, look at the people who were present at the meeting, and who among them spoke out. According to the saga, the people who were present had been summoned by Erling: ‘he sent word to all chieftains whom he knew to have been trusty friends of King Ingi, also to the body of his followers and retainers who had escaped [...] and set a time for their meeting.’<sup>57</sup> Erling was evidently the one who picked the people who participated in the debate.

This becomes more obvious when thinking about who spoke out and what they said. Take Nikolas Skjaldvorsson, for example. Not only was he a member of the inner circle, Arstad finds it reasonable to believe that he attended the coronation of King Magnus and that he was amongst the twelve landed men who swore to obey the laws.<sup>58</sup> Erling had entrusted him to defend first Bergen, the dating is a bit uncertain but possibly from 1160, where he was either the one who orchestrated or at least consented to the capture and execution of King Sigurd Sigurdsson Markusfostered and his foster-father Markus of Skog.<sup>59</sup> Then Erling entrusted him with the defence of Trondheim and the Trøndelag region, that is, the region most antagonistic to his son’s rule, a job he apparently did so well that when he died ‘people felt much grief’.<sup>60</sup> So when Nikolas rose at the debate to suggest they look to the son of Kristin and Erling,

---

<sup>54</sup> Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, pp. 150-151

<sup>55</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 790

<sup>56</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 37 p. 816; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 45

<sup>57</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>58</sup> Arstad, ‘Nikolas Skjaldvorsson’; *HkrME.*, Ch. 22 p. 807

<sup>59</sup> Arstad, ‘Nikolas Skjaldvorsson’; *HkrME.*, Ch. 9 p. 797

<sup>60</sup> Artsad, ‘Nikolas Skjaldvorsson’; *HkrME.*, Ch. 38-40 pp. 816-818

he was not making some wild suggestion but aiming it specifically in the favour of the man who had favoured him.

The second one to speak at length at the debate was Arne Ivarsson, who, allegedly, was Magnus's godfather. Arne was married to King Inge's mother, and was clearly considered to be a loyal follower by Erling. Looking at the ties of Arne to the others involved, it becomes clear that asking Arne if they could have one of his sons as king was just a formality, a recognition of their claim if you like. If Nikolas Skjaldvararson speaks with subtlety, then Arne Ivarsson speaks with the subtlety of a blunt axe, when he replies: 'that the son of Kristín, and the daughter's son of King Sigurth, was by birth the best entitled to be king in Norway.'<sup>61</sup>

Thirdly, look at the circumstances under which the debate took place. In a short period of time Inge's faction had lost both one of their most prominent leaders and their king. Effectively, they are down with a broken back. So when Nikolas Skjaldvorsson stated that they needed someone with 'the necessary qualifications for that task [to] be the leader of their forces, because then it would be easier to collect an army.' he is speaking as someone with concern for the future.<sup>62</sup> Arne Ivarsson followed this up in describing Erling as a man 'much tested in battle'.<sup>63</sup> What is not clear after this is, is whether they wanted a leader who can fight back against the enemy and who can avenge the death of King Inge, or if this something Snorre wants them to want.

So why was Magnus their fourth choice? For all the reasons listed above. Erling needed to clear the path, and the best way to do that is to have the other candidates decline, or rather have their guardians decline on their behalf. Furthermore, he couldn't bring up the candidacy of his son himself, so the saga portrayed that he had others, trusted and loyal men, members of the inner circle, do it for him. In that way Erling kept control of potential threats, and if one of the men proved difficult to control – he simply arranged for him to die. Finally, how did Erling achieve the result he wants? By picking the people who make the decision.

---

<sup>61</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>62</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

<sup>63</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 1 p. 789

Let us return to the quotation that began this chapter and examine more closely the points raised by Erling Skakke. The saga stated that if Magnus was not chosen king according to ancient custom, then Eystein could with his 'authority give him the crown according to God's law and anoint him for the royal power.'<sup>64</sup> This raises the question of what anointing was and what 'anoint[ed] [him] for the royal power' might have meant?'<sup>65</sup>

The pagan monarchies of the East, down to the time of the Sassanids, offered many examples of royal consecration at the hands of priests. But we may ignore these proceedings, as well as the earliest medieval coronations, which took place in Byzantium, since these precedents, if they were known at all in the West, seemingly exerted no influence there. It was rather the Old Testament account of the anointing of Saul and David by Samuel that provided the medieval West with an example of royal consecration.<sup>66</sup> The holy oil administered by a priest made the king especially suited to wear the crown. Through anointment he became a man set apart by a special relationship with God.<sup>67</sup>

Though there were biblical, Roman, and Byzantine precedents, it was from Carolingian times that anointing became the norm. In 751 the Franks resolved to do away with the division of government between the legitimate kings and the powerful Mayors of the Palace. The Mayors of the Palace had been the de facto rulers of the Frankish kingdom for a century and a half.<sup>68</sup> One major difficulty in assessing both the Carolingians and the last Merovingian kings is the bias of the sources. Most of the narrative sources for the eighth and early ninth centuries are pro-Carolingian.<sup>69</sup>

In that year Pepin the Short replaced the last Merovingian king Childerich III with the consent of the pope. By and large, the situation did not change that much, the Carolingians remained in power and kept control of the kingdom. That is not to say that the situation resembled the position Magnus was in. For instance, Pepin still faced the question of legitimacy. Pepin had to make up for the shortness of his hair,

---

<sup>64</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 p. 806

<sup>65</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 p. 806

<sup>66</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 34

<sup>67</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 26

<sup>68</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom under the Carolingians 751-987* (London: Longman, 1983), pp. 24-33

<sup>69</sup> Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom under the Carolingians 751-987*, pp. 23-24

the anointing acted as an insurance policy.<sup>70</sup> They both sought papal approval for what they were doing; within the Frankish realm ecclesiastical support had become so essential to Pepin that it was clearly in his interest to seek ecclesiastical support for his political authority.<sup>71</sup> In Pepin's case, both he and the Church mutually benefitted from this.<sup>72</sup> This is also in line with what Kern says about the Church: 'the Church allied itself with force, and sanctioned force by its very alliance.'<sup>73</sup> As such the support from the Church, the papal approval and coronation, was an attempt grant the new dynasty the legitimacy it lacked. Like Magnus, the new Carolingian dynasty had no dynastic claim

Once anointed and crowned the king was "the Lord's anointed."<sup>74</sup> Being anointed and crowned was hugely important, since it was only after the anointing and crowning the king came into possession of his powers.<sup>75</sup> The inevitable result of such a recognition or denunciation by the ecclesiastical authorities was to stamp an existing political authority either as divinely ordained or as godless, thus the Church in the early Middle Ages claimed a share in setting up a king.<sup>76</sup> This resulted in the Church, by means of consecration, gave its sanction to an individual prince's right to govern and thereby marked him out as God's vicar on earth.<sup>77</sup> It was this sanction that Erling sought for Magnus's kingship, in the belief that it would serve to cover for his lacking hereditary rights.<sup>78</sup> Thus a new criterion of monarchy came into being, in addition to those set up by rights of blood or by election: the sanction of the Church, which followed only rules of its own.<sup>79</sup> This theocratic idea of office matured especially early among the Visigoths where the clergy and the clerical hierarchy received the central place in the administration.<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom*, p. 35

<sup>71</sup> McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom*, pp. 35-36

<sup>72</sup> McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom*, p. 36

<sup>73</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 28

<sup>74</sup> Robert E. Bjork, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 448

<sup>75</sup> Sverre Bagge, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), p. 129; Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, p. 86; Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, p. 125

<sup>76</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 26

<sup>77</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 26

<sup>78</sup> Fredrik Paasche, 'Magnus Erlingsson kongedømme' in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed., Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), pp. 98-99, 101

<sup>79</sup> The principal biblical texts for the theocratic idea of office are as follows: Mark X, 42; Mark IX, 35; Matthew XX, 26sq.; and Luke XXII, 26

<sup>80</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, pp. 27-28



Returning to the account in the saga, we might want to consider why it was important to Erling that Magnus was lawfully begotten when the examples he used were not. Next to the baptismal vows, which in the early Christian Roman Empire had become the first personal requirement in a ruler's eligibility for the throne, birth in wedlock, at the time of Magnus, been established as the second canonical qualification for the royal office, as evidenced in the Church's preference of Magnus over other, illegitimate, pretenders.<sup>81</sup> In this respect, however, the clerical demand for suitability is opposed to the Germanic principle of kin-right, not because the Church supported power against impotence, but because it was determined to exact definite religious or moral standards from the ruler of a Christian state. This was something that had been emphasised as early as the Council of Paris in 829, where emphasis was put on the insignificance of rights of blood in order to enhance the importance of regarding kingship as office. Government was office and duty, not proprietary right. These standards could be formal, like the requirement of legitimate birth, but it is noteworthy that the formal criteria of suitability could be dispensed with if broader issues were at stake. Thus, to take one example, the Church favoured Tancred of Lecce in 1189 and 1190, although he was a bastard, in order to prevent Southern Italy from falling into the hands of a '*genus persecutorum*'.<sup>82</sup>

A broader question with regards to all of this and the account in the saga is to consider the reason why consecration provided protection against deposition. A king without chrism and crown was perhaps in an uncertain position, but a king who had not been irrefutably designated and acclaimed had no position at all.<sup>83</sup> From the start, consecration of the monarch signified more than a mere ecclesiastical involvement and allusion to divine benediction. Pope Gregory the Great typified it by stating that the consecration bestowed upon the secular authority was a sacrament. Sacramental doctrine was still very fluid in the early Middle Ages. The Augustinian idea of sacrament allowed, and even insisted, that all rites and usages that revealed to the faithful a supernatural gift of grace, a *sacra res*, were to be conceived of as sacraments; however, when the sacramental doctrines of the Church were defined, from the twelfth century onwards, and the number of sacraments was limited,

---

<sup>81</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, pp. 29-30

<sup>82</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, pp. 29-30

<sup>83</sup> Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, p. 150

monarchical consecration was, not included among them.<sup>84</sup> But the three distinctive features that medieval doctrine attributed to all sacraments still belonged in some measures to royal consecration, and since in the early Middle Ages consecration had been regarded as a distinct sacrament, it continued to be regarded as at least a quasi-sacrament in the well-defined dogma of the later Middle Ages.<sup>85</sup> Consecration, which according to the early medieval Church, was a vehicle of supernatural virtue, brought results, expressed in symbolical form, which were both psychological and religious on the one hand, and ecclesiastical and legal on the other.<sup>86</sup> The ceremony provided the king with the Church's seal of approval, which meant that not only was he the people's choice; he was also God's choice and that set him apart from other men – he ruled with Christ.<sup>87</sup>

Thus ecclesiastical sanction became a constituent factor in all governments not supported at their establishment by dynastic rights. This was the case with Magnus. The sanction could be expressed either by a simple declaration of ecclesiastical support or approbation, or by the participation of the episcopate in the election of a ruler.<sup>88</sup> In the earlier Middle Ages, consecration became the usual method of such approval. Ecclesiastical acts, in accordance with the faith of the time, were commonly associated with visible rites of a definitely ceremonial character. When, therefore the Church sanctified a ruler's office by its confirmation, it was natural that it should express its blessing in a formal legal act which symbolised the divine legitimation and endorsement of the right to the throne. The development of this legal act, which was both ecclesiastical and political in character, was completed in the period between the sixth and the ninth centuries.<sup>89</sup>

The value of the Church's recognition varied from ruler to ruler in the Middle Ages. A king who mounted his father's throne might enjoy sufficient support in the dynastic conceptions of Germanic society to be able to safely dispense with ecclesiastical

---

<sup>84</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 36

<sup>85</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 36

<sup>86</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 36; Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, p. 86;

<sup>87</sup> Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, p. 142-143

<sup>88</sup> Cf. the Law of Succession of 1163/64, where the archbishop and suffragan bishops are heavily involved in the election of the new king, even going as far as giving them final say: "[...] konongr væra er ærkibiscope oc lioðbiscopum thyckir bezt væra fallenn til" (he shall be king whom the archbishop and the suffragan bishops thinks is most suited for it). 'Kong Magnus Erlingssons tronfølgelov' in *Norske Middelalderdokumenter*, ed., Sverre Bagge, Knut Helle, and Synnøve Holstad Smedsdal, (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1973), pp. 32-35

<sup>89</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, pp. 33-34

confirmation. In that case, consecration by the Church came to be at most a declaratory or affirmative act devoid of constitutive importance in the establishment of his right to govern. It was otherwise with rulers who had no hereditary claim to the throne, who, in contrast with rulers possessing a hereditary right, might perhaps be raised on the shield. Even though these rulers considered election by the people to be the true legal basis of their kingship, they normally desired not only such an election – which was independent of blood-right and sometimes hostile to it – but also the sanction of the Church. King Stephen of England sought the sanction of the Church and even included it in his titles in an attempt to ward off pretenders.<sup>90</sup> Government, which was deemed to be not simply a mandate from the people, but to possess independent rights of its own, ought, at its establishment, to receive an exalted sanction independent of popular will; this was what general feeling demanded. The elected king, therefore, sought support and confirmation either in kin-right or in ecclesiastical consecration, or in both.<sup>91</sup> Consecration was therefore important to Magnus and Erling, as it proved to everyone that Magnus had the support and backing of the Church, and that they viewed him as the true king in face of potential pretenders.

In the saga account of the discussion between Erling and Eystein, there is a mention of Magnus's rivals. Here, it is pertinent to briefly explore who those may have been and the extent to which their candidacy could compare to that of Magnus.

All the rivals Magnus's kingship faced, with the exception of Sverre Sigurdsson, were minors just like he was. It is therefore interesting to note that clerical theory emphasise capacity and not inherited right which led to the Church opposing the rights of minor to succeed.<sup>92</sup> Norway and Scandinavia must have been an exception to this rule, or it did not apply at all. It also opposed the eligibility of illegitimate sons to succeed to the kingship; again this did not present significant obstacles for illegitimate sons to present their claims. However, the Church favoured force, as we saw in the example with the Carolingians. They would support a legitimate ruler when

---

<sup>90</sup> George Garnett, 'Coronation and Propaganda: Some Implications of the Norman Claim to the Throne of England in 1066: The Alexander Prize Essay', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 36 (1986), pp. 95-99; William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9th edn, rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford, 1921), p. 142.

<sup>91</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, p. 33

<sup>92</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, p. 29

strengthening his authority served the maintenance of order and Christian government, however, if those objects required a different course, the Church often supported powerful usurpers who were more suitable.<sup>93</sup> None of the other rivals could present or put as much force behind their claims as Magnus and Erling could. Therefore they were not attractive partners for the Church.

Magnus's first rival was Håkon the Broadshouldered Sigurdsson, son of King Sigurd the Mouth who was brother of King Eystein Haraldsson and King Inge the Hunchback Haraldsson. He was chosen as the figurehead of the followers of his late father and uncle, who would not follow King Inge, most likely because he was the cause of King Eystein's and King Sigurd's death. The fact that Håkon could claim the kingship through right of blood, and the fact that he was hailed as king at the Øreting, made him a serious contender to Magnus.<sup>94</sup> The Church's primary concern was to have a ruler who possessed two things: the goodwill and the power to put God's law into practice.<sup>95</sup> At this point it should probably be pointed out that Håkon was a minor, just like Magnus, and as such it is not their ability to possess these things that matter, but rather that of their guardians. Also, the faction that elected Magnus did not do so from a point of strength. They did it after having suffered the sudden loss of their king and one of their most prominent members, Gregorius Dagsson.<sup>96</sup> It thus seems like the election of Magnus was just as much an election of Erling. With the election of Magnus, their luck turned and Håkon was quickly defeated and killed the following year.<sup>97</sup> What followed over the next few years was a series of pretenders, alleged sons of Eystein and Sigurd, but they were all defeated.<sup>98</sup> With the exception of the last one: Sverre Sigurdsson.<sup>99</sup>

### **Possible motivations for the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson**

Thus far we have explored Magnus's benefits of being crowned. What we have not been exploring as of yet is the motivations for going through with the coronation. We have briefly touched upon some of Erling's motivations, but those have focused more upon protection from domestic threats. However, what about international threats?

---

<sup>93</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law*, pp. 28-29

<sup>94</sup> Koht, 'Hendingsgang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177', HT 40, p. 233

<sup>95</sup> Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages*, p. 28

<sup>96</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 45

<sup>97</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p.45

<sup>98</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 9 p. 797, Ch. 17 p. 802, Ch. 18 p. 803, Ch. 35 p. 815, Ch. 36 p. 815, Ch. 41 p. 818

<sup>99</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 45

Furthermore, one whose motivations have been left untouched until now is Eystein Erlendsson, the archbishop who officiated at the coronation. Consequently, this section will explore the international scene and the motivations of the archbishop.

On the international stage there was only one threat to Magnus' kingship: Denmark. Denmark had just been through a period of weakened kingship, but this came to an end with King Valdemar I in 1157. He quickly consolidated his position and began expanding outwards.<sup>100</sup>

Just after Magnus had been elected king, Erling travelled to Denmark to seek support from his wife's cousin, King Valdemar of Denmark.<sup>101</sup> What happened next depends on which source you choose to believe: Fagerskinna, Heimskringla, or Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*. A brief summary can be recounted as follows: Erling received from King Valdemar a guarantee of support, and in exchange he promised to secede Viken, an area today roughly corresponding to the counties surrounding the Oslo Fjord, to King Valdemar. Afterwards the relations between the two seem to have cooled considerably, in particular as Valdemar supported several rivals of Magnus and even went on campaign in Norway.<sup>102</sup> However, this was not without effect for in 1170 Erling travelled to Denmark and became the Danish king's man for Viken with the title of earl.<sup>103</sup>

Could therefore the coronation of Magnus been seen as a countermove to the strengthening of Danish kingship? Possibly, and it would not be without historic precedent. The earliest historians of Scandinavia, writing in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, believed that, although the Danish kingdom had existed since time immemorial, the kingdoms of Norway and Sweden were relatively recent creations, formed in the tenth and eleventh centuries by the unification of many small kingdoms. Earlier sources confirm that the Danish kingdom was well established and powerful by the end of the eighth-century, but there is no contemporary evidence for a multitude of small kingdoms in other parts of Scandinavia at that time.<sup>104</sup> In the early ninth century many of these rulers and chieftains, especially in southern Scandinavia,

---

<sup>100</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen', p. 213

<sup>101</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 2 p. 790

<sup>102</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling', p. 213

<sup>103</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 30 pp. 813-814

<sup>104</sup> Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation circa 800-1500*, The Nordic Series, vol. 7 (University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 1993), p. 49

acknowledged the Danish kings as their overlords. The heart of the Danish kingdom was at that time in south and central Jutland and the neighbouring islands, but the Danish empire included not only the whole Danish archipelago but also the surrounding coastlands.<sup>105</sup> A chain reaction of pressure from the south, through Denmark, put pressure on Norway but around 800 the Danes managed to resist the Carolingians and established themselves in Viken around Kaupang. This happened again at the end of the tenth century when a similar situation occurred and the Danes again fought off the pressure from the Empire through consolidation of power and Christianisation.<sup>106</sup> Periods of weakened Danish kingship offered the Norwegian kings, pretenders, and chieftains more room for manoeuvre. Such a period was coming to an end in the middle of the twelfth century and to protect against the Danish claim on southern Norway that was bound to come, Erling sought protection in the Church. To him a kingdom united under one king, recognised and consecrated by the Church, must have presented the best opportunity to fight the historic Danish claims to Viken.

Let us move on to explore what motivations archbishop Eystein Erlendsson might have had to participate in the events of 1163. Archbishop Eystein Erlendsson belonged to one of the foremost families in Norway. His great-grandfather, Ulf Uspaksson, was of Icelandic descent but he became marshal (*stallari*) of King Harald Hadrada and a good friend of his, as evidenced when he was given a sister of Queen Tora, daughter of Torberg Arnesson, Jorunn, as wife.<sup>107</sup> Through her Eystein descends from the Arnmødlingætt and he was therefore related to all kings descending from Harald and Tora.<sup>108</sup> Eystein's father, Erlend Himalde, was a second cousin of King Magnus Barefoot, which made Eystein a third cousin of King Sigurd the Crusader and King Harald Gille, father of King Inge the Crouchback.<sup>109</sup> Eystein was therefore connected to Erling by marriage and to Magnus by blood. Before Eystein became archbishop, he was king Inge's finance minister (*fehirde*) and therefore it can be assumed that he was close to the king. According to Gunnes, it is very likely that Inge appointed Eystein to the archbishopric in Nidaros, foregoing the

---

<sup>105</sup> Birgit and Peter Sawyer, *Medieval Scandinavia: From Conversion to Reformation circa 800-1500*, p. 51

<sup>106</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling', p. 212

<sup>107</sup> *HkrHHard.*, Ch. 9 p. 583, Ch. 37 p. 608; *Msk.* Ch. 32 p. 204

<sup>108</sup> *HkrHHard.*, Ch. 37 p. 608

<sup>109</sup> *HkrHHard.*, Ch. 37 p. 608

election by the chapter, as was common practice and even stipulated in the *Canones*.<sup>110</sup> *A Speech Against the Bishops* supports this, according to it ‘then Inge chose Eystein, is chaplain and finance minister – without asking any of the learned men in Trondheim, neither the canons nor any other.’<sup>111</sup>

Compared to most of his contemporaries Eystein was a worldly and cosmopolitan man. Whereas most of his contemporaries had never travelled further than the closest market town, he had travelled from Trøndelag to Paris to study at the heart of the leading cultural nation in Christendom, and then to Anagni to receive his pallium. We cannot know for certain what he studied in Paris, however, there is no denying that he came home well educated; schooled in the liberal arts and learned in law and theology.<sup>112</sup>

The sagas tell us that Eystein was sceptical about Magnus’ claim on the throne because it broke with existing customs and practices.<sup>113</sup> However, for the Archbishop, Magnus’ claim must have presented itself as the best possible way for him to achieve his own goals of church reform. Ever since Eystein became archbishop in 1157 he had worked to increase the freedom of the church in Norway.<sup>114</sup> For instance, the *Saga of Magnus Erlingsson* tells us that when Eystein was elected to the archbishopric, ‘he was well-thought of by all the people [...] The people of Trondheim District gave him a good reception, because most of the leaders there were connected with him by kin or by other relationship, and were all close friends of his.’<sup>115</sup> It goes on to say that with the support of his ‘kinsfolk and friends’, Eystein pushed through an increase in the dues to the archbishopric, decreeing that they should be paid in pure silver coins and not with the current coin which inflation had caused to become less valuable.<sup>116</sup> The need for this, explains Gunnes, was that the archbishopric needed the increased

---

<sup>110</sup> Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger*, (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996), p. 82; *Sverres saga. En tale mot biskopene*, tr. Anne Holtsmark (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1961), p. 279-280

<sup>111</sup> *Forsvarstale for kong Sverre mot bispane*, tr. Eirik Eggen (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1940), pp. 68-69

<sup>112</sup> Erik Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger*, p. 49

<sup>113</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 p. 805

<sup>114</sup> Lars Roar Langslet, *Våre konger: En vei gjennom norgeshistorien* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 2002), pp. 78-79; *HkrME.*, Ch. 16 p. 802, Ch. 21 p. 805

<sup>115</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 16 p. 802

<sup>116</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 16 p. 802

funds to pay for the building of the cathedral and that it yet did not own much land on its own.<sup>117</sup>

In one of their conversations in the saga, Erling asks Eystein if this rise in dues had been done in accordance with the laws of Holy King Olaf, to which Eystein replies that the laws do not forbid him from raising the value of the dues in the manner in which he had done it. Erling, in turn, then replied: 'If you wish to increase your rights, then you will wish to help us increase the king's right as much.'<sup>118</sup> According to the author of the saga, Eystein subsequently reminds Erling of the promise he gave at the point at which the archbishop and the bishops gave their consent to Magnus becoming king: 'This you promised at the time, Erling, that if we gave our consent to Magnús being elected king, you were to strengthen God's rights in all places and with all your might.'<sup>119</sup>

For the Church, it was a demand that only legitimate sons could be kings, therefore the Church had preferred King Inge to his brothers and this is why they now preferred Magnus to the other pretenders.<sup>120</sup> Clearly what Eystein got out of this deal was the increased power of the Church, with ecclesiastical law becoming equal to temporal law. Furthermore, he also had Magnus swear loyalty to the Church and Pope Alexander III, and Magnus additionally swore to support and promote the Church.<sup>121</sup>

Eystein's belief in the Gregorian reform movement must have been strong, seeing how much trouble he went through to have it implemented just for him to watch it all go away with the death of Magnus. Through his alliance with Erling Skakke and Magnus Erlingsson he implemented a good deal of the ideas surrounding the Gregorian reform movement. He secured an increase in the dues owed to his archbishopric through negotiations with the people but it did not stop there, as we will see in the next chapter.

\* \* \*

---

<sup>117</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 89-90

<sup>118</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 20 p. 804

<sup>119</sup> *HkrME.*, Ch. 21 pp. 805-806

<sup>120</sup> Koht, 'Hendingsgang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177', HT 40, p. 233

<sup>121</sup> Jardar Skaadel and Sven Erik Skarsbø, *Norske kongar og regentar: Frå Harald Hårfagre til Harald 5*, (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1998), p. 50



At the beginning of this chapter we explored the first of the three themes of this dissertation, namely how Norwegian kingship worked in theory. This has been done through looking at the rules surrounding kingmaking where it was discussed that *konungstekja* was an intricate affair and the kin-right held by all the king's sons even more so. In the latter part, the possible motivations for having Magnus crowned were discussed. Here, it is clear that Erling and Eystein had two different views. To Erling, the succession and coronation presented itself as the best possible way to secure and legitimise his son's reign. To Eystein, it was the closest he could get to a clean slate; it was his opportunity to implement the ideas of the Gregorian reform movement in a way not afforded his contemporaries.

## Theme Two: Norwegian Kingship in practice

### Introduction

This chapter explores the second of the three themes outlined in the introduction: how Norwegian kingship worked in practice. Again the focus on the analysis will rest on the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson and how events played out according to the sagas. First, we will attempt to piece together a workable timeline from when Magnus was acclaimed king in Bergen in 1161 to his coronation in that same place in either 1163 or 1164. Then, we will see if it is possible to piece together how the coronation of Magnus would have played out. Finally, we will look at the coronation oath and the *Letter of Privileges* from King Magnus to the Norwegian Church, to see what they can tell us about Magnus's kingship.

### Timeline and dating the coronation

Let us begin by attempting to establish a timeline of events from the election of Magnus as king in 1161 to his coronation in 1163 or 1164 by looking at what the source material say about the death of King Inge and election of Magnus, Erling's activities in the time between the election and the coronation, the death of Håkon the Broadshouldered, and the dating of the coronation. The sources we will be looking at are *Heimskringla*, Saxo Grammaticus's *Gesta Danorum*, *Sverre's saga*, the *Gesta Regis Henrici II*, and finally *Fagrskinna*.

Our investigation starts with *Heimskringla*. It is here we find the fullest description of the events, which is why this is the source ultimately used by historian when discussing this period. In *Heimskringla* the events leading up to the coronation of Magnus are recorded as follows. King Inge fell in the Battle on the Ice in the winter of 1161 outside Oslo.<sup>122</sup> Erling was in Bergen at the time, and it was here he convened the meeting that elected Magnus.<sup>123</sup> Immediately after the election of Magnus, Erling, and a large retinue, set sail for Denmark, seeking out King Valdemar I. Valdemar and Erling entered into negotiations, with *Heimskringla* recording that '[Valdemar] and Erling spent a long time together in meetings and making plans, the upshot of which was that King Valdemar was to lend King Magnús all the support from Denmark which he would need to maintain possession of Norway, in return for

---

<sup>122</sup> *HkrHHerd*, Ch. 17-18, pp. 784-785

<sup>123</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 1, p. 798

which Valdemar would obtain the dominion in Norway which his earlier kinsmen [...] had had [...]'.<sup>124</sup> Erling and his men returned to Norway, fought Håkon and killed him.<sup>125</sup> Magnus is then proclaimed king at Øreting; Sigurd Markusfostre is proclaimed king, but is also killed; after the last of Sigurd's followers have been cleared away, Erling and Eystein sit down in Bergen to discuss the matter of dues being paid in silver to the Church. In the process of which they agree to crown Magnus.<sup>126</sup> According to the author of *Heimskringla*, the archbishop crowned King Magnus in Bergen: saying that he was eight and had been king for three years.<sup>127</sup>

As stated above *Heimskringla* was compiled around 1220, and it is therefore a later source to the events it describes than Saxo Grammaticus. Snorre wrote his narrative for the grandson of King Sverre, Magnus's main opponent, which does not give him an incentive to portray the actions of Erling and King Magnus in favourable light. For instance, a portrayal of the kingship of Magnus as weak would serve to enhance the prestige of the Birchleg-kingdom of Sverre and his successors. Hence it may come as no surprise that in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* events play out a bit different than they do in *Heimskringla*.<sup>128</sup>

Saxo's narrative of the events in Norway begins with the birth Valdemar's son Canute, at around which time a party of men arrives from Norway asking the king to wage war on 'those that have seized dominion in Norway'.<sup>129</sup> Then follows a short background of the conflict in Norway, from the time of Sigurd Slembe and Harald Gille in 1136 leading up to the Battle on the Ice in 1161, a battle he describes as the biggest and bloodiest battle in

---

<sup>124</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 2, pp. 790-791

<sup>125</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 3-7, pp. 791-796

<sup>126</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 8-21, pp. 796-806

<sup>127</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 22, p. 807

<sup>128</sup> There is a huge historiography on Saxo and his work. For some of the most relevant for this particular dissertation, see for instance Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes, Book I-IX*, 2 vols., eds. Peter Fisher and Hilda R. Ellis Davidson (Cambridge, 1979-80); Ivan Boserup, ed., *Saxostudier. Saxo-kollokvierne ved Københavns universitet* (Copenhagen, 1975); Kurt Johannesson, *Saxo Grammaticus: Komposition och världsbild i Gesta Danorum* (Stockholm, 1978); Curt Weibull, "Vem var Saxo", *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Dk), 78 (1978), 87-96; Idem., "Saxos berättelser om de danska vendertågen 1158-85", *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Dansk), 83 (1983), 35-70; Rikke Malmros, "Blodgildet i Roskilde historiografiskt belyst", *Scandia*, 45 (1979), 46-66; Inge Skovgaard-Petersen, "Saxo som samtidshistoriker. Det skånske oprør", *Scandia*, 56 (1990), 31-43; Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia. Books X-XVI: the Text of the First Edition with Translation and Commentary* (hereafter Saxo, *DRHH*), 3 vols., ed. Eric Christiansen, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 84 and 118 (Oxford, 1980-1); Birgit Sawyer, "Valdemar, Absalon and Saxo: Historiography and Politics in Medieval Denmark", *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 63 (1985).

<sup>129</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Danmarks Krønike*, tr. by Frederik Winkel Horn (København: Christiansens Kunstforlag, 1898), Book 14 ([http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar\\_den\\_store](http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar_den_store))

Norway to date.<sup>130</sup> In Saxo's work, Erling does not immediately convene a meeting to have Magnus elected king. Instead he flees with him, taking with him what is left of Inge's followers, to Denmark, where King Valdemar greets them with great hospitality. During their stay in Denmark there is no mention in Saxo about any negotiations taking place between Erling and Valdemar. Saxo goes from talking about how Valdemar 'cares for them in their exile', to how Erling 'suddenly' reappears in Norway and immediately has Magnus acclaimed king and lets it be known that he will seek revenge for the death of Inge.<sup>131</sup> It is revealed that the men who came to King Valdemar when his son was born are in fact the remnants of Håkon's followers.<sup>132</sup> The followers of Håkon then promised Valdemar what Erling, according to *Heimskringla*, promised him: overlordship over an unspecified part of the country.<sup>133</sup> Valdemar proceeds to test the waters, and finding them favourably, goes to Norway. Saxo then recounts how, when Erling finds out that Valdemar is coming, he flees 'far away to the furthest reaches of Norway, for he thought it wisest to flee to the outer regions of the country than to defend the part of it the enemy reaches first.'<sup>134</sup> Rather than pursuing Erling, as he is advised to do, Valdemar decides to go on a hearts-and-minds tour and, unsurprisingly, according to Saxo 'he was joyfully received by the people' and was proclaimed king at Borgarting.<sup>135</sup> Saxo makes a point of saying that had Valdemar pursued the enemy, i.e. Erling, he could have 'without a doubt' united Denmark and Norway under one king.<sup>136</sup> Here, it is important to note that Saxo never thought highly of Valdemar. For instance, he opposed many of the novelties introduced by the Valdemars and defended traditional customs and rights. Furthermore, in Saxo's narrative, his patron Absalon is the hero of the story.<sup>137</sup> From Sarpsborg Saxo records how Valdemar went on to Tønsberg, where he was too pious to burn the town down to get to a few followers of Erling, but despite his piety, Saxo says, the bishops 'who had great

---

<sup>130</sup> Saxo, Book 14

<sup>131</sup> Saxo, Book 14

<sup>132</sup> Saxo, Book 14; Valdemar's son Canute was born in 1163, the importance of which will be revealed later.

<sup>133</sup> Saxo, Book 14 'De blev vel modtagne af Kongen og overhængte ham stadig med Bønner om Hjælp og Løfter om, at han skulde faa en Del af Norge.'

<sup>134</sup> Saxo, Book 14 '[...] langt bort som muligt til Norges fjerneste Egne, idet han holdt det for raadeligere at fly til Landets yderste Grænser end at væge den Del af det, Fjenden først maatte komme til.'

<sup>135</sup> Saxo, Book 14 'blev modtagen med Glæde af Folket'

<sup>136</sup> Saxo, Book 14 'vilde han uden Tvivl'; 'Hvis han imidlertid havde ladet alt andet fare og strax forfulgt Fjenden, vilde han uden Tvivl have kunnet forene Norge med Danmarks Rige.'

<sup>137</sup> Birgit Sawyer, 'Valdemar, Absalon and Saxo: Historiography and Politics in Medieval Denmark' *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'histoire*, 63 (1985), pp. 6-8

authority in Norway at that time' would not come to Valdemar.<sup>138</sup> Saxo thinks this has more to do with consideration for the country than with any loyalty they had to Erling.<sup>139</sup> In the end Valdemar went back home to Denmark, the campaign having taken too long, and with him went most of the people who had joined him – fearing for their lives if they stayed behind.<sup>140</sup>

Saxo hence appears to record that after the fall of Inge in 1161, there was a scramble for aid from Denmark from all of the claimants to the Norwegian throne: Erling and Magnus, and Håkon. Saxo's portrayal of Erling Skakke clearly differs from Snorre's portrayal; in *Heimskringla* he is portrayed as almost devoid of a personal desire for revenge, but in the *Gesta Danorum*, Erling is said to be seeking revenge for the death of Inge.<sup>141</sup> However, it is interesting to note that Saxo's narrative of these events does not begin with King Inge's death in 1161, but in 1163 with the birth of Canute and the arrival of Håkon's followers. Saxo does not mention any offer of assistance to Erling and Magnus; instead he spends more time on Valdemar's campaign in Norway. Naturally, Saxo's portrayal of events is more like the justification of a foreign king with weak claims making a move on another country in turmoil; Valdemar would not be the first king to exploit such a favourable situation. Nevertheless, what is clear from Saxo's narrative is that the relationship between Norway and Denmark was complicated.<sup>142</sup>

The *Gesta Danorum* contains no exact chronology and the only approximate date given is the birth of Jesus during the reign of King Frode III in the fifth book.<sup>143</sup> When and in what order the various books within the work was written is open to historical interpretation. Book 14, which contains the description of the events in Norway, ends with Absalon becoming Archbishop of Lund in 1178.<sup>144</sup> The last event in the narrative, in Book 16, is the conquest of the Wends by King Canute VI in 1185/6 and some historians have speculated that the contemporary section of Saxo's work (books 14-16) was compiled shortly after this event or at least before 1202

---

<sup>138</sup> Saxo, Book 14 'hvis Myndighed paa den Tid var overmaade stor i Norge'

<sup>139</sup> Saxo, Book 14 'Alligevel kunde ingen af Biskopperne, hvis Myndighed paa den Tid var overmaade stor i Norge, faa sig til at begive sig til ham, hvilket jeg dog snarere tror skyldtes Hensynet til deres Fædreland end til Erling.'

<sup>140</sup> Saxo, Book 14

<sup>141</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling', HT 93, p. 209

<sup>142</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling', p. 213

<sup>143</sup> Saxo, Book 5 'Paa den Tid kom Alverdens Forløser til Verden [...]'

<sup>144</sup> Saxo, Book 14

because of the complete absence of references to King Canute's brother Valdemar II who succeeded to the throne in that year.<sup>145</sup> However, in the dedication, Saxo mentions the newly acquired territory north of the River Elbe in 1208, and it is possible that while he was busy writing up the glorious past of the Danes in books 1-13, he also added and revised the earlier sections.<sup>146</sup> Based on this evidence then, it is possible that Saxo's *Gesta Danorum* provides a near-contemporary account of the events surrounding the coronation, preceding *Heimskringla* and also parts of *Sverre's saga*, which we will look at next.

*Sverre's saga* is a contemporary saga, written by Abbot Karl Jonsson for King Sverre (1177-1202). Contemporary, here means that the author is writing about events from his own lifetime with direct access to eyewitness accounts, or he is basing it on other contemporary sources, either written or oral accounts from eyewitnesses.<sup>147</sup> The first part of the saga, known as *Gryla*, was most likely written between 1185 and 1188, when Karl Jonsson was in Norway and under the supervision of the king himself.<sup>148</sup> The latter part of the saga was most likely written after the king's death in 1202, and it probably dates to 1214 because it contains a reference to the election of Archbishop Guttorm, who was elected in that year.<sup>149</sup> Although the saga is contemporary, it is, pertinent to note that the manuscripts containing it are all of significantly later dates. The saga has survived in four different manuscripts: (1) A. M. 327, 4to, which has been dated to c. 1290; (2) A. M. 47 fol., also known as *Eirspennill* (brass-clasp), has been dated to c. 1280; (3) *Flateyjar-bok* was written in Iceland between 1370-1380; (4) A. M. 81a fol., also known as *Skalhólts-bok Yngsta*, has been dated to c. 1430.<sup>150</sup> It is, moreover, important to keep in mind that *Sverre's saga*, along with *Håkon Håkonsson's saga*, is official history writing: they are propagandist work meant to

---

<sup>145</sup> Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia. Books X-XVI: the Text of the First Edition with Translation and Commentary*, 3 vols., ed. Eric Christiansen, British Archaeological Reports, International series, 84 and 118 (Oxford, 1980-1), iii, 905

<sup>146</sup> Saxo, Book 16; dedication

<sup>147</sup> Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319: Handbok i Norges historie bind 1 del 3* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1964), p. 3

<sup>148</sup> Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 51; *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway*, Prologue, p. 1

<sup>149</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom* p. 162; Sverre Bagge, *From gang leader to the Lord's anointed: kingship in Sverris saga and Håkonar saga Håkonarsonar*, (Odenese: Odenen University Press, 1996), pp. 15-18; *The Saga of King Sverri of Norway* (Sv.s.), Ch. 161

<sup>150</sup> Sv.s., p. vii-viii

serve the political programme of the Sverre-kindred and give their version of the history of the Birchleg-kingdom.<sup>151</sup>

The part of *Sverre's saga* containing details surrounding the election and coronation of Magnus can be found in Chapter 89. In it, the author have Magnus say: 'I was five years old when the chiefs and folk of this land gave me the name of King, and seven years old when consecrated King by the Legate from Rome and Archbishop Eystein, assisted by all the people's bishops of this land.'<sup>152</sup> This means the election and the coronation, according to the timeline established by the author, were two years apart – 1161 and 1163. This makes *Sverre's saga* the only source to give us the age of Magnus at his election and at his coronation. However, unfortunately for us, the narrative does not cover the period before Sverre's arrival in Norway in 1176.

Another valuable source is the *Gesta Regis Henrici secundi et Gesta Regis Ricardi primi*, a chronicle covering the reigns of King Henry II and King Richard I of England. Following an examination of the work by Doris Stenton, all historians now agree the author to be Roger of Howden, a clerk of both kings.<sup>153</sup> The *Gesta* was begun in 1169, the same year as Howden entered royal service, and seems to have been completed in 1192, when Howden returned from the Third Crusade.<sup>154</sup> Howden also wrote a *Chronica*, begun in 1192 or 1193, and as a significant part of the *Gesta* is written as events happened showing no obvious anticipation of later history and most of it has indications of being 'unfinished work', it would appear that the *Gesta* acted as a draft for the later *Chronica*.<sup>155</sup> The *Gesta* is a source of great interest for the events of how Magnus came to the throne because it is an independent source commenting on the events of Norway, without being closely linked to any of the factions. Hence, what it presents are the views of a distant observer. It also contains information about King Magnus, and it is this that may help us in our quest for a timeline. The *Chronica* contains the same information as the *Gesta*, but in a much more abbreviated form and is therefore of little further use to us.

---

<sup>151</sup> Knut Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, p. 3

<sup>152</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 89, p. 112

<sup>153</sup> Doris M. Stenton, 'Roger of Howden and Benedict', *English Historical Review*, 68 (1953), pp. 574;

<sup>154</sup> David Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts of Roger of Howden's 'Chronica'', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983), p. 303; Stenton, 'Roger of Howden and Benedict', p. 579

<sup>155</sup> Stenton, 'Roger of Howden and Benedict', p. 574-9

Scholars can, furthermore, be reasonably certain as to where Howden procured his information about Norway. After the defeat of Erling Skakke at the Battle of Kalvskinnet in 1179, Archbishop Eystein, fearing for his life, went into exile in England, where he stayed from summer 1180 to April/May 1183.<sup>156</sup> Whilst in exile, we know that he stayed at Bury St. Edmund from August 1181 to February 1182, and that he also visited Canterbury.<sup>157</sup> Hence, it seems likely that Howden received his information about the events of the 1160s during Eystein's stay in England in the early 1180s, making the *Gesta* a near-contemporary account of the events.

The *Gesta* begins its narrative of Norwegian events with King Sverre's victory over King Magnus: 'Eodem anno quidam presbyter nomine Swerus bellum iniit contra Magnum regem Norwegiaë, et eum devicit.'<sup>158</sup> It follows this by giving a clumsy account of the civil wars, i.e. it manages to make Sigurd the Crusader the brother of Magnus Barefoot, who in fact were his father ('Sivardus et Magnus fratres errant').<sup>159</sup> It continues with Magnus Barefoot going to Ireland, siring Harald Gille, and being killed by the Irish. Harald Gille then goes to Norway after the death of his father and asks his uncle<sup>160</sup> for a share of the kingdom, which he receives once it is established that Harald is in fact a son of Magnus Barefoot. Then the *Gesta* tells how Sigurd the Crusader had two children, Magnus the Blind and Kristina, who, apparently, he himself gave up to Erling Skakke for a wife; together they have a son called Magnus. Then the narrative take a leap forward, and Magnus is blinded by Harald, who then become king of Norway; Harald, in turn has four children by different mothers: Inge I the Crouchback, who was legitimate, Sigurd II the Mouth, Eystein II, and Magnus. It goes on to tell of how Sigurd Slembe killed Harald and how he and Magnus the Blind were later slain. Howden further records that after their death the sons of Harald became king, and that their brother Magnus had died before this happened. Then

---

<sup>156</sup> Jakub Morawiec, 'The Archdiocese of Nidaros and its Political Encounters in Late 12<sup>th</sup> and Early 13<sup>th</sup> Century Norway', in *Ecclesia et Violentia. Violence against the Church and Violence within the Church in the Middle Ages*, eds. Kotecki, Radoslaw and Maciejewski, (Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014), pp. 214-215; Anne J. Duggan 'Eystein, Thomas Becket, and the Wider Christian World', in *Eystein Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed. Steinar Imsen, (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), p. 28

<sup>157</sup> Gunilla Iversen, 'Transforming a Viking into a Saint', in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages. Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, eds. Margot E. Fassler, and Rebecca A. Baltzer, (Oxford, 2000), p. 412; Morawiec 'The Archdiocese of Nidaros and its Political Encounters', p. 215

<sup>158</sup> *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* (Howden, *Gesta*), p. 266

<sup>159</sup> Howden, *Gesta*, p. 266

<sup>160</sup> This should be brother, not uncle (*ad patrum suum regem Sivardum*)



follows a list of the sons of Sigurd: Håkon II the Broadshouldered, Sigurd Markusfostre, and Sverre Sigurdsson, all born of different mothers, all of them being illegitimate. Next Inge had his brothers Sigurd and Eystein murdered, but was in turn killed by Håkon. According to the *Gesta*, this led to resentment among the nobles of the kingdom; they promptly elevated Magnus, son of Erling and Kristina, as their king. As they were not able to sustain the war against Håkon, Erling and Magnus went to Denmark from where, having recovered their strength, they returned to Norway, killing Håkon thereby ensuring that Magnus became master of the whole kingdom. Sigurd, Håkon's brother, rose up but he was killed and Magnus was crowned and anointed king in the second year of his reign and in the fifth year of his age.<sup>161</sup> First of all, Howden's knowledge of names and relations is impressive. The rest of his narrative is not as detailed when come to names, indicating that this came straight from the horse's mouth, so to speak. Secondly, it is interesting to see that the narrative he creates broadly resembles the one's we so far have seen in the other sources. Thirdly, the way the Norwegian narrative is incorporated into the *Gesta* is a bit strange. In the account Howden goes from telling how King Henry II summons the King of Scotland to Normandy to how Sverre won the kingdom of Norway from King Magnus. Then after the excommunication of King Sverre by Archbishop Eystein, it goes on to listing the names of people who died in 1180.

The reason why the *Gesta Henrici* is of importance to us in this context is because it is only source to date Magnus's coronation in a European context, namely the papacy of Pope Alexander III, thereby giving us other events to compare the chronology with: '[Magnus] consecratum: anno silicet quarto papatus Alexandri papæ tertii'.<sup>162</sup>

The narrative in the *Gesta* clearly differs from the other sources. Resentful magnates elect Magnus, they go to Denmark because they cannot sustain the fight against Håkon, and Magnus is only crowned after the death of both Håkon the Broadshouldered and Sigurd Markusfostre. And, it states that Magnus was crowned in the fourth year of the reign of Pope Alexander III, i.e. sometimes between 8 September 1162 and 7 September 1163, and that it took place in the second year of Magnus's reign.<sup>163</sup> Hertzberg is of the belief that the *Gesta* began Magnus's reign

---

<sup>161</sup> Howden, *Gesta*, p. 266-268

<sup>162</sup> Howden, *Gesta*, pp. 267-268

<sup>163</sup> Howden, *Gesta*, p. 268

with his acclamation at the Øreting, which according to *Heimskringla* happened after the death of Håkon the Broadshouldered, in the summer of 1162.<sup>164</sup> That might very well be the case, but I cannot find any evidence in the *Gesta* that supports Hertzberg's belief. There is simply no mentioning of when Magnus's reign begins. Anyhow, if the *Gesta* began Magnus reign with his acclamation at the Øreting, the second year of Magnus's reign would be 1164, something which would place it in the fifth year of Pope Alexander III reign. If his reign began with his election in 1161, 1163 would be the second year of his reign, placing it within the fourth year of Alexander's reign.

The final source we are going to examine is *Fagrskinna*, another contemporary saga. An unknown Iclander, or a Norwegian, most likely wrote *Fagrskinna* in Norway in the 1220s, and probably commissioned by King Håkon Håkonsson.<sup>165</sup> The anonymous author of *Fagrskinna* and of *Heimskringla* both used *Morkinskinna* as a source.<sup>166</sup> The narrative in *Fagrskinna* is fairly similar to that in *Heimskringla*: Magnus becomes king, they travel to Denmark, Erling and Valdemar strikes a deal with the same prize given for Valdemar's help.<sup>167</sup> Håkon's death is mentioned in passing, along with the arrival of the legate Stephanus in Norway, who was well received by King Magnus and the bishops, while the archbishop was visiting in Hålogaland.<sup>168</sup> According to *Fagrskinna*, Erling then travelled north to Nidaros, during the spring after the arrival of the legate, to see the archbishop and to have their conversation.<sup>169</sup> The result of that discussion was that Magnus was crowned king that summer in Bergen. According to *Fagrskinna* he was seven years old.<sup>170</sup>

*Fagrskinna* is, according to Bagge, more concerned with the royal office and tones down the competition between various kings and magnates. Bagge believes that this is in anticipation of *Hákonar saga gamla*, which was commissioned by the court and

---

<sup>164</sup> Koht, 'Hendingsgang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177', HT 40, p. 235; Ebbe Hertzberg, 'Den første norske Kongekroning, dens Aarstal og ledsagende Omstændigheder' HT 18 (1905), pp. 29-171; *HkrME*, Ch. 7 p. 796; Bente Opheim Brathetland, 'Håkon 2 Sigurdsson Herdebrei' (2009. 02.13) in *Norsk biografisk leksikon*. ([https://nbl.snl.no/H%C3%A5kon\\_2\\_Sigurdsson\\_Herdebrei](https://nbl.snl.no/H%C3%A5kon_2_Sigurdsson_Herdebrei)) [accessed 2015.04.18]

<sup>165</sup> Magerøy, Hallvard. (2009.02.14). 'Fagrskinna', in *Store norske leksikon* (<https://snl.no/Fagrskinna>) [accessed 2015.04.20]; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 164

<sup>166</sup> *Hkr.*, p. xxiii;

<sup>167</sup> *Fsk.*, Ch. 108, p. 348

<sup>168</sup> *Fsk.*, Ch. 108, p. 349

<sup>169</sup> *Fsk.*, Ch. 108, pp. 349-350

<sup>170</sup> *Fsk.*, Ch. 108, p. 350; Ch. 109, p. 351

probably written under supervision of King Magnus Håkonsson, where the *rex iustus* ideology finally makes its breakthrough.<sup>171</sup>

Having presented all of the sources and their take on the events in question, it is clear that it is not possible to ascertain the exact chronology of these events. However, a possible timeline of events emerges along these lines. Magnus was elected king sometime in the winter or spring 1161, shortly after the death of King Inge.

Depending on the source, Erling then travelled to Denmark to secure support for the reign of his son, either before or, after the election. It seems to me that the more plausible explanation is after the election. Valdemar's concern with subduing the Wends at this time meant that he would have had more incentive in supporting a relative that had already secured his position rather than someone who was still fighting to achieve it. This interpretation could also explain why Saxo seems to describe several factions arriving in Denmark during this period. Then, in 1162, whilst Eystein was visiting in Hålogaland, Erling was busy fighting Håkon the Broadshouldered, and after his death, proceeded with Magnus to Nidaros where the Øreting was summoned and acclaimed Magnus as king over all of the land. Following this, in the spring of 1163, Erling travelled to Nidaros and had his "infamous" chat with Eystein where they reach an agreement that ultimately led to the coronation later that same year.<sup>172</sup>

## **The Coronation of King Magnus**

In order to answer the question about how Kingship worked in practice, it is important to piece together the events surrounding the coronation of Magnus. Snorre's account of the coronation is important, as his foster-father, Jon Loptsson, had been present at the coronation. Snorre thus had access to an eyewitness to the events in writing his narrative.

Snorre's account of the coronation is relayed in the twenty-second chapter of Magnus Erlingsson's saga:

‘Magnús was then consecrated as king by Archbishop Eystein, and at the coronation there were present five other bishops, the papal legate, and a multitude of clerics.

---

<sup>171</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 164

<sup>172</sup> Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, p. 36; Egil Nygaard Brekke, 'Magnus Erlingssons kroningsår', *Historisk Tidsskrift* Vol. 40 (Oslo, 1961), p. 5

Erling Skakki, together with twelve landed-men and the king swore oaths to obey the laws.<sup>173</sup>

We have already discussed the meaning of consecration above, hence it will not be repeated here. First of all, it is evident that the man who is responsible for the coronation, the *coronator*, is the archbishop himself, the papal legate being reduced to a spectator or a very important witness. Under normal circumstances the papal legate should have been the *coronator* because as a representative of the Holy See he always held higher rank than the clergy in the country to which he came, irrespective of what office he held.<sup>174</sup> *Sverre's saga* first states that the legate consecrated King Magnus, but later it states that Eystein and Stephanus together consecrated King Magnus.<sup>175</sup> In the first instance, from Olsok in 1181, the twenty-five year-old Magnus is speaking to a large crowd in Nidaros, following a speech made by Sverre where he for the second time offered to share the kingship between himself and Magnus. On this occasion, Magnus used the fact that he 'was consecrated and crowned king by the legate from Rome' as justification for refusing Sverre's offer.<sup>176</sup> In the second instance, he is speaking to his own men before the Battle of Fimreite in 1184. Clearly this is a speech under different circumstances than the previous one; this is a battle speech meant to spur his men on to fight and if needed to die for his right to be king. He begins by outlining his claim:

'I was five years old when the chiefs and folk of this land gave me the name of King, and seven years old when consecrated King by the Legate from Rome and Archbishop Eystein'<sup>177</sup>

He then proceeds by stating:

'There is no need for me to urge you on with words; you can all see our need that everyone should do his manliest. We have abundant means; we have no lack of troops; God be praised, that wherever we touched land, men have joined our ranks. Sverri has now scattered his forces here and there, and has now but a few men left with him, and they are enclosed here before us, in the fiord, like sheep in a pen. May God grant us such an end to this encounter that we may have peace and freedom from our enemies hereafter, whether we remain alive or die.'<sup>178</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 22 p. 807

<sup>174</sup> Fredrik Paasche, 'Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme', p. 99

<sup>175</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 60 p. 78; Ch. 89 p. 112

<sup>176</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 60 p. 78

<sup>177</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 89 p. 112

<sup>178</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 89, p. 113

As battle speeches go, it is not a bad one. The saga tells us it was ‘received with great applause.’<sup>179</sup> Unfortunately, the value of it is small; it is after all relayed to us through the saga of Magnus’s enemy, even if the saga goes to great length to portray Magnus and Erling as favourable as possible in order to make Sverre’s eventual victory that much greater and more prestigious.<sup>180</sup>

Secondly, we see that the king swore oaths, but since he was a minor Erling Skakke and twelve ‘landed-men’ swore the oath with him.<sup>181</sup> The coronation oath has survived into the modern period as part of fifteen canons from a Norwegian general synod dating from c. 1200.<sup>182</sup> The dating of this text, as it has survived, as with when the coronation happened, remains a much-discussed topic.<sup>183</sup> The author of the oath is believed to be archbishop Eystein, but with contributions from the papal legate Stephanus of Orvieto.<sup>184</sup> Helle contests any contributions from the papal legate. According to him there are no sources that tell us why the papal legate was there. He suggests that the legate was there either to strengthen the ties between Norway and the papacy, or that the legate was just passing through on his way to Sweden.<sup>185</sup> Gunnes disagrees with Helle on this, believing that, based upon *Sverre’s saga*, the legate was there to receive the oath on behalf of the papacy, and that he also contributed to its final form. He stresses, however, that the oath is not to be read as an oath of fealty to the papacy. It only represents the Church’s interest in building a network of kingdoms with connections to Rome.<sup>186</sup> Steinar Imsen has supported Gunnes’s view. He too sees the involvement of the Church, and reminds us that the coronation has papal consent. He also denies, like Gunnes, that the coronation oath should be viewed as an oath of fealty to the papacy along the lines of the oaths sworn

---

<sup>179</sup> *Sv.s.*, Ch. 89, p. 113

<sup>180</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 163

<sup>181</sup> *HkrME*, Ch. 22, p. 807

<sup>182</sup> ‘Kong Magnus Erlingssons kroningsed’, in *Norske middelalderdokumenter*, Sverre Bagge, Synnøve Holstad Smedsdal and Knut Helle (ed.), (Bergen, 1973), p. 30

<sup>183</sup> *NMD Oath*, p. 30; For a summary of this discussion, see *NMD*, p. 30.

<sup>184</sup> Eirik Vandvik, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningseid’ in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, eds. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen, (Oslo, 1969), p. 204; Steinar Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein Erlendsson som politiker’ in *Eystein Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker, kirkebygger*, ed. Steinar Imsen, (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), p. 19; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein* p. 110

<sup>185</sup> Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, p. 38

<sup>186</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 110; *Sv.s.*, Ch. 60, p. 78

by the rulers of southern Italy.<sup>187</sup> The truth is that we may speculate, but until someone uncover definite proof, we may never know why the legate was there.

The text of the oath states:

‘I, King Magnus, promise and swears by the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost and by these sacred relics, that I will henceforth be faithful and obedient to the Holy Roman Church and the highest bishop, lord Alexander, and his Catholic successors, and abide by what the lord Pope Adrian stipulated when he was legate in the kingdom of Norway, about Peter’s Pence and the State and Church affairs, and by ability ensure they are observed by others; and that I shall exercise justice towards churches, the clergy, the people who are my subject, high and low, and especially widows and orphans, as well as rich and poor, according to the laws of the fathers and the provisions of the holy canons I will give the Church answers in spiritual matters when it asks me about its right; and that I according to my abilities shall render the due reverence and the due services according the requirements of the divine and human law pertinent to the Church of Trondheim and throughout the kingdom of Norway, and not forcibly require any services from it, except those the holy canons allows to answer kings, if itself not due to difficult times voluntarily provide them.’<sup>188</sup>

The second paragraph is very interesting. King Magnus swears to be faithful and obedient to the Church, and the pope and his successors. As we touched upon just a moment, this is not to be read as an oath of fealty to the papacy.<sup>189</sup> Instead, Helle believes it should be seen as the Norwegian king taking side in the conflict between Pope Alexander and Frederick Barbarossa’s anti-pope Victor IV, who had the support of King Valdemar of Denmark.<sup>190</sup> Eystein had already chosen a side when he went to be consecrated; he went to Alexander III rather than the Ghibelline Victor IV, who had the support of King Valdemar and Bishop Absalon of Roskilde, but not the Archbishop who therefore were in exile. Furthermore, Duggan see this as a continued orientation away from the Empire in general and the see of Hamburg-Bremen in particular, which was still trying to reassert its ancient ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the North.<sup>191</sup> Duggan’s argument make sense in that on a personal level the choice of Alexander over Victor must have been an easy one for Eystein to make: Alexander was his friend. On a political level, the choice must yet again have been easy: Eystein

---

<sup>187</sup> Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein Erlendsson som politiker’, p. 19

<sup>188</sup> *NMD Oath*, pp. 30-32

<sup>189</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein* p. 110; Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein Erlendsson som politiker’, p. 19

<sup>190</sup> Helle, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319*, p. 38

<sup>191</sup> Anne J. Duggan, ‘Eystein, Thomas Becket, and the Wider Christian World’, p. 27

was a convinced Gregorian, and believed in a free and independent Church – the opposite of what Victor represented.

If this oath was meant to be an oath of fealty it would be very difficult to prove. It was not uncommon for the papacy to send letters or for papal witnesses to be present at coronations. However, the practice of swearing oaths of fidelity to the pope was extremely rare and was used only in very specific circumstances. Take for instance the oath of Robert Guiscard in 1059, when the papacy was essentially trying to buy his services, or the oath of King John in 1213, with John surrendering the kingdom of England in return for papal support against France and any rebellious subjects.<sup>192</sup> In 1059 Robert swore:

‘[I] Shall be from this time forth faithful to the Roman Church and to you, Pope Nicholas, my lord. Never shall I be party to a conspiracy or undertaking by which your life might be taken, your body injured or your liberty removed. [...] Everywhere and against all adversaries I shall remain, insofar as it is in my power to be so, the ally of the holy Roman Church, that she may be preserve and acquire the revenues and domains of St. Peter. [...] I shall conscientiously pay, every year, to the Roman Church the agreed rent for the territories of St. Peter which I do or shall possess. [...] I shall faithfully observe, with regard both to the Roman Church and to yourself, the obligations which I have just undertaken, and shall do likewise with regard to your successors who will ascend to the honour of the blessed Peter [...] So help me God and all his Holy Gospels.’<sup>193</sup>

Nothing in Magnus’s coronation oath is as strongly worded as these sections from Robert Guiscard’s oath of 1059. In the text Magnus never swears to refrain from participating in conspiracies against Pope Alexander, nor did he swear to be an ally of the Church. The revenue Magnus swears to surrender to the Church is Peter’s Pence, which, of course, Norway was not alone in paying. Most countries in Europe paid Peter’s Pence including Denmark, England, Sweden, Poland, and Prussia.<sup>194</sup> Hence, it was nothing out of the ordinary for Magnus to agree to pay it.

In John’s oath of 1213, the king expresses a ‘desire to humble ourselves’ before he:

‘Offers and freely yield to God, and to SS Peter and Paul His apostles, and to the Holy Roman Church our mother, and to our lord Pope Innocent III and his catholic successors, the whole kingdom of England and the whole kingdom of Ireland with all

---

<sup>192</sup> Brooke *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, p. 221; Ralph V. Turner, *King John: England’s Evil King?* (Stroud: History Press, 2009), pp. 133-134.

<sup>193</sup> J.J. Norwich, *The Normans in the South* (Harlow: Longman, 1967), pp. 128-129

<sup>194</sup> Per Bjørn Halvorsen (consultant) “Peterspenger”, (2009.02.14.), *Store norske leksikon*, (<https://snl.no/peterspenger>) [accessed 2015.04.21]

their rights and appurtenances [...] And now, receiving back these kingdoms from God and the Roman Church and holding them a feudatory vassal [...] we have publicly paid homage for the said kingdoms to God, and to the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, and to the Roman Church and to our lord aforesaid, Pope Innocent III, [...] As a token of this our perpetual offering and concession we will and decree that out of the proper and special revenues of our said kingdoms, in lieu of all service and payment which we should render for them, the Roman church is to receive annually, without prejudice to the payment of Peter's pence, one thousand marks sterling five hundred at the feast of Michael and five hundred at Easter that is, seven hundred for the kingdom of England and tree hundred for the kingdom of Ireland [...].<sup>195</sup>

The wording of the second part of this concession is almost identical to the oath sworn by Robert Guiscard:

‘I, John [...], will from this hour henceforward be faithful to God and Saint Peter and the Roman Church and my lord Pope Innocent III and his catholic successors. I will not take part in deed, word, agreement, or plan whereby they should lose life or limb or be treacherously taken prisoners; any injury to them, if aware of it, I will prevent and will check if I can; and otherwise, I will notify them as soon as possible, or inform a person whom I can trust without fail to tell them; any counsel they have entrusted to me either personally or by envoys or by letter I will keep secret, nor will I wittingly divulge it to anyone to their disadvantage. I will help in maintaining and defending, to the utmost of my power, against all men, the patrimony of Saint Peter, and particularly the kingdom of England and the kingdom of Ireland. So help me God and the Holy Gospels of God whereon I swear.’<sup>196</sup>

In return Pope Innocent III and the Church promised to:

‘[...] Take under the protection of Saint Peter and of ourselves your person and the persons of your heirs together with the said kingdoms and their appurtenances and all other goods which are now reasonably held or may in future be so held: to you and to your heirs, according to the terms set out above and by the general advice of our brethren, we grant the said kingdoms in fief and confirm them by this privilege, on condition that any of your heirs on receiving the crown will publicly acknowledge this as a fief held of the Supreme Pontiff and of the Roman Church, and will take an oath of fealty to them. Let no man, therefore, have power to infringe this document of our concession and confirmation, or presume to oppose it. If any man dare [sic] to do so, let him know that he will incur the anger of Almighty God and of SS Peter and Paul, His apostles [...].’<sup>197</sup>

---

<sup>195</sup> ‘King John’s Concession of the Kingdom to the Pope’ Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III, concerning England (1198-1216), (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1956), p. 178-183; William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9th edn, rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford, 1921), pp. 279–81.

<sup>196</sup> ‘King John’s Concession of the Kingdom to the Pope’ Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III, concerning England (1198-1216), p. 178-183

<sup>197</sup> ‘King John’s Concession of the Kingdom to the Pope’ Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III, concerning England (1198-1216), p. 178-183



Again, there is nothing in the wording of the text of Magnus's coronation oath that resembles the language in the concession of King John to the Pope. Magnus never offers up his kingdom to the pope and he does not receive it back to hold as a vassal. Nor does he pay homage to God, the saints, the Church, or the pope. Again, for Magnus to agree to pay the Peter's Pence just like King John seems usual practice, and there is no mention in the text of any further payments of any kinds, unlike John's promise to pay annually 1,000 marks of silver.

Both the oath of 1059 and that of 1213 represent occasions when the political circumstances of both parties were such that an oath of fidelity was extremely beneficial to both. The coronation of Magnus was not such an occasion. It might have been mutually beneficial for a papal witness to confirm the coronation and hence also confirming the authority of Pope Alexander, but it did not require any oath of fealty. Furthermore, the oaths of 1059 and 1213 are very similar in terms of wording of the responsibility to the papacy and both survive in the papal archives. The main differences between these two oaths, and the oath that Magnus swore, is that in Magnus's oath there is no mention of what Magnus would get in return from the papacy. Robert Guiscard was in return given [something], and King John of England was in return given full papal support '[...] Under the protection of Saint Peter and of ourselves your person and the persons of your heirs together with the said kingdoms and their appurtenances and all other goods which are now reasonably held or may in future be so held [...]'<sup>198</sup>. To prove this differently one would have to establish a similarity with these oaths and to a document in the papal register or come up with a valid reason as to why it is not there. However, it is not within the limits of this paper, room for a discussion of the size needed to prove or disprove such a thing.

The second paragraph of the coronation oath continues with King Magnus promising to 'abide by what the lord Pope Adrian [IV] stipulated when he was legate in the kingdom of Norway, about Peter's Pence and the State and Church affairs, and by ability ensure they are observed by others'.<sup>199</sup> Pope Adrian IV was in Norway as a legate in 1152/53 to organise the Norwegian ecclesiastical province, and scholars have often claimed that the legate's stipulations was identical to the *Canones*

---

<sup>198</sup> 'King John's Concession of the Kingdom to the Pope' Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III, concerning England (1198-1216), p. 178-183

<sup>199</sup> *NMD Oath*, p. 30.

*Nidrosiensis* which were discovered and published by Walter Holtzmann in 1938.<sup>200</sup> The dating seemed plausible, as late as the 1950s it was a widely recognised fact, but later studies have showed that a more accurate dating is 1163/64 in conjunction with the meetings that took place in Bergen when Magnus was crowned.<sup>201</sup> If this is the case, it would help explain two things: one, why the coronation oath starts off in the way it does; and two, that having a legate present at the coronation gave the papacy a unique chance to ensure that ecclesiastical practice was abided to in Norway. However, since the *Canones* no longer dates from Adrian's time in Norway, this limits our knowledge of his work there. The majority of what is known about Adrian's stipulations is relayed to us through later texts and on the whole the Norwegian sources for Adrian's activities are rather sparse.<sup>202</sup> Hence, what is meant in the coronation oath by Adrian's stipulations is impossible to know.

In the third paragraph of the oath, the king promises to 'exercise justice towards churches, the clergy, the people who are my subjects, high and low, and especially widows and orphans, as well as rich and poor, according to the laws of the fathers and the provisions of the holy canons I will give the Church answers in spiritual matters when it asks me about its right'.<sup>203</sup> This is a clear reference to the ecclesiastical *rex iustus*-ideology. The king is the Church's protector, which is why he is also its master: Magnus swear to render the Church the services its due and no to demand more from that canonical law says it can give, and King Henry I swear to set the Church free without demanding anything from it.<sup>204</sup> This becomes even more obvious when we discuss the *Law of Succession*, so we will discuss this in more detail there.<sup>205</sup>

The fourth paragraph seems to be inspired by the *libertas ecclesiae*-ideology: the Church becomes autonomous from the kingship. He will give the Church 'due reverence and due service' and not 'forcibly require any services from it', in return

---

<sup>200</sup> Erik Gunnes, 'Erkebiskop Øystein som lovgiver', in *Nye middelalderstudier. Kongedømme, kirke, stat*, eds., Claus Krag and Jørn Sandnes (Oslo, 1983), p. 94.

<sup>201</sup> Imsen, 'Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker', p. 11; Sverre Bagge, 'Den heroiske tid – kirkereform og kirkekamp 1153-1214', in *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie, Senter for Middelalderstudier, NTNU. Skrifter no. 5*, ed. Steinar Imsen, (Trondheim, 2003), pp. 55-58

<sup>202</sup> Gunnes, 'Erkebiskop Øystein som lovgiver', p. 95

<sup>203</sup> *NMD Oath*, p. 30

<sup>204</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 63; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 38; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 106-107; 'Kong Magnus Erlingssons kroningsed', p. 30-32; 'Henry I's coronation charter'

<sup>205</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 63; Imsen, 'Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker', p. 17; Page 20 ff. in this dissertation

the Church will help out in times of need by ‘voluntarily provide them’.<sup>206</sup> This autonomy constitutes one of the cornerstones of the Gregorian Reform: local autonomy that primarily meant free bishops elections and clergy appointed under ecclesiastical supervision, the other being an evolution of the papal role as leaders of Christendom.<sup>207</sup>

With regards to most of its contents, Magnus’s coronation oath is not unique. For instance, by examining the coronation oath of King Henry I, there are similarities. As Magnus promises to ‘exercise justice towards churches, the clergy, the people who are my subject, high and low, and especially widows and orphans, as well as rich and poor’, King Henry similarly promises ‘out of respect for God and the love I have towards you <all>, in the first place cause God’s church to be free, on such terms that I shall neither sell [it] nor lease it at farm’ and ‘when a husband has died, his wife shall have remained and shall be without children, she shall have her dower and marriage gift, and I shall not give her to a husband except in accordance with her wish [...] if any wife shall have remained who has children, she shall have her dower and marriage gift for as long as she shall have kept her body lawfully, and I shall not give her except in accordance with her wish.’<sup>208</sup> These coronation oaths or charters all seem to be based around the same idea: protecting the weak and the innocent, and the Church.

The coronation oath contains a clear indication that the coronation was perceived as increasing the right of King Magnus to the kingdom.<sup>209</sup> It contains the essentials: the promise to respect the law and protect the rights of the weaker members of society, and above all the Church. The direction is clear: kingship is an office that commits the holder to be a just king with a serving and supporting relationship to an independent and international Church. The king promises the Church fair treatment, he will not pressure the Church for more than what it is willing to give. The king guarantees that canon law will be respected throughout the kingdom. To both Gunnes and Helle this is representing a major step towards an independent ecclesiastical jurisdiction.<sup>210</sup> If this is what Erling intended, we cannot know, but he must have know that the

---

<sup>206</sup> *NMD, Oath*, p. 32

<sup>207</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 52-53

<sup>208</sup> *NMD, Oath*, p. 30-32; ‘Henry I’s coronation charter’

<sup>209</sup> Paasche, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme’, p. 101

<sup>210</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 190; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 38

incumbent Pope Magnus swore loyalty to had been elected because he was the most aggressive representative for the Gregorian reform movement. So when King Magnus unconditionally committed to implement canon law, this meant canon law as interpreted and developed in radical-Gregorian direction by Alexander III in his decrees.<sup>211</sup> This means that Erling must have consented to the constitutional position granted to the Archbishop, and he must have known that this was so that he could implement the Gregorian programme.<sup>212</sup> However, that Erling was no eager Gregorian is evident when in 1177-78 the archbishop refrained from appointing a bishop until he had received consent from Erling and King Magnus, breaking with what we later will see in the *Letter of Privileges*.<sup>213</sup>

The next document we will discuss is probably best described as a companion to the coronation oath: the *Letter of Privileges*. The *Letter* is only preserved in two late copies of a transcript that is most likely from 1276, one by Henrik Høyer from c. 1600, AM 22 fol., and the other by Arne Magnusson, AM Apographa No. 3, and the dating of it is as controversial as the dating of the coronation and the coronation oath.<sup>214</sup>

Helle calls the *Letter of Privileges* the ‘crowning achievement of the cooperation between the Church and the kingdom’.<sup>215</sup> Vandvik have established that Eystein is the author, and it was written at the beginning of Magnus’s reign. Now, the dating of the *Letter* is tricky. Taranger claims that it cannot be older than 1172/73; Kolsrud date it to after the meeting in Randers in 1170; whereas Vandvik disagree with both, reading the *Letter* in such a way that Magnus was still a child and therefore ends up dating it to the same year as he dates the coronation, 1163.<sup>216</sup> The problem with Vandvik’s dating is that the earliest mentioning of Eystein being a legate dates from 1169. The letter is not appointing him legate, which means he could have been appointed at an earlier date. If that is the case, then Vandvik’s is the only dating that can be considered wrong. Taranger and Kolsrud both therefore present plausible dates for

---

<sup>211</sup> Brekke, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningsår’, HT 40 1960 p. 12-13

<sup>212</sup> Brekke, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kroningsår’, HT 40 1960, p. 13

<sup>213</sup> Brekke HT 40 p. 13

<sup>214</sup> NMD ‘Privilegiebrev fra kong Magnus Erlingsson for Den norske kirke’, pp. 48-50; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 42; Torfinn Tobiassen, ‘Tronfølge og privilegiebrev’ in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, eds. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simonsen, (Oslo, 1969), p. 216

<sup>215</sup> Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 41

<sup>216</sup> Absalon Taranger, ‘Kong Magnus Erlingssons privilegium for den norske kirke’, *Norvegia Sacra* 2 (1922), s. 54; Kolsrud HT 30 p. 482; Vandvik, *Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev og kongevisle*, p. 45

when the *Letter* was issued. Unfortunately, this is another one of these things we cannot know for certain until someone unearth definite proof for either of the dates.

In his study of the *Letter*, Torfinn Tobiassen divided it into four main paragraphs: the *intitulatio*, next comes what he calls the ‘arenga’, which he thinks is of ‘exceedingly great importance’, the third main paragraph contains the provisions detailing Magnus’s submission to St. Olav, and the fourth main paragraph is partly about affirming of older privileges and the granting of new ones.<sup>217</sup>

Because of the length of the *Letter of Privileges* I will only include the passages that are of interest to our discussion for what it meant for Magnus’s kingship.

‘Magnus, by grace of God Norway’s king, Eystein, of the same grace archbishop of the Trønders and [the] legate of the apostolic see, and the whole body of bishops, the clergy and the whole of the people who [resides/lives] in Norway greetings. When we on the advice of the wisest men have received the sovereignty of the kingdom and the kingdom’s crown by the hand of the Lord through the invocation of the Holy Ghost by Your laying on of hands venerable father Eystein [...] To God I give today, on the day of the Holy Resurrection, myself with the kingdom forever, and to the glorious martyr King Olav, which next after the Lord I with particular devotion confers the Norwegian kingdom in perpetuity. And as far as Gods willing, I shall keep the kingdom as this glorious martyr’s hereditary patrimony, under his suzerainty and as his vicar, and keep it for him. And because the aforementioned martyr for his God, for the subject’s salvation and to preserve this kingdom, fearless met with his enemies, and without hesitation delivered himself to them hallowed this kingdom by shedding his precious blood, I wish, so far as my powers permits, with God and the same martyrs help, to imitate him in virtues just as I succeeds him in the kingdom. And whatever difficulty, distress or affliction who call on me, I will without fear, confident in God and his protection with Him as my leader and as His soldier, go to battle to fight in His army to maintain law and justice, to defend the country as St. Olav patrimony. [...] And in testimony of the eternal submission I admit this metropolitan church this privilege on behalf of me and all my Catholic followers, and reaffirm with my sealed letter that after my departing shall surrender the royal crown, both mine, which I today sacrifice to the holy altar for affirmation, and all of my successors, to this church. [...] But because it belongs to the king's office that he will appear to others as a model of good conduct and not abolish the law but fulfil it - for it is worth little to encourage with words to what one does not affirm with example - we give after Your reminder, venerable father Eystein, God the solid promise that from now on we will pay a full tithe of our fields and farms after God's law.’<sup>218</sup>

The *Letter* begins with King Magnus ‘by Gods grace’ greeting archbishop Eystein, who by the same grace is archbishop and legate of the apostolic see. This represents

---

<sup>217</sup> Torfinn Tobiassen, ‘Tronfølgelov and privilegiebrev’, pp. 216-217

<sup>218</sup> *NMD Priv.*, pp. 48-54

the first use of *rex dei gratia* in Norwegian history.<sup>219</sup> What follows is just as interesting. He details how he became king: '[by the] advice of the wisest men have [I] received the sovereignty of the kingdom and the kingdom's crown', this can refer to three things: the meeting in Bergen where Magnus was elected king by the magnates still loyal to King Inge, or the assembly of magnates and clergymen convened in Bergen in 1163/64 for the coronation of Magnus. It can also be, very simply, a standard wording used in these types of documents. The word used here is '*sapienciorum*', a word which Helle has pointed out occurs quite frequently in legislation and literature.<sup>220</sup> It refers to the 'good men' the king was supposed to surround himself with to prove that he was not a tyrant. The prevailing ecclesiastical view held that the distinction between a good and a bad ruler is that the former rules with the consent of a general council of prelates and magnates.<sup>221</sup> 'The hand of the Lord through the invocation of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of your hands venerable father Eystein', can refer to the anointing of the king, which is a key part of the coronation ceremony, or, as Vandvik thinks, it has nothing to do with the actual coronation but the confirmation that had to take place before the coronation ceremony.<sup>222</sup> The most remarkable part of the *Letter* is the section that details the submission of King Magnus to St. Olav:

'To God I give today, on the day of the Holy Resurrection, myself with the kingdom forever, and to the glorious martyr King Olav, which next after the Lord I with particular devotion confers the Norwegian kingdom in perpetuity. And as far as Gods willing, I shall keep the kingdom as this glorious martyr's hereditary patrimony, under his suzerainty and as his vicar, and keep it for him. [...] And in testimony of the eternal submission I admit this metropolitan church this privilege on behalf of me and all my Catholic followers, and reaffirm with my sealed letter that after my departing shall surrender the royal crown, both mine, which I today sacrifice to the holy altar for affirmation, and all of my successors, to this church.'<sup>223</sup>

This represents a further step in the direction of the *rex iustus*-ideology begun with the coronation oath. The royal saint is a new actor in European ideology introduced in

---

<sup>219</sup> *NMD Priv.*, p. 50

<sup>220</sup> Helle, *Konge og gode menn*, pp. 19-20; in Norse '*sapienciorum*' is usually translated as '*vitrari*' or '*vitrustu*' a form we will meet again shortly.

<sup>221</sup> Lindy Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France*, (London and New York: Longman, 1998), p. 299

<sup>222</sup> Eirik Vandvik, *Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev og kongevigsle* (Oslo, 1962) p. 47

<sup>223</sup> *NMD Priv.*, pp. 50-52

the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, and the foremost, and only, royal saint in Norway was St. Olav.<sup>224</sup> The royal saints were a characteristic of the new kingdoms of the tenth century onwards, according to Bagge. He is of the opinion that the earliest royal saints; among them Merovingian and Anglo-Saxon king were saints despite their royal rank rather than because of it.<sup>225</sup> The cult of St. Olav was quickly established and spread with remarkable speed, and the importance of it cannot be downplayed, according to Steinsland; and Bagge concurs, saying that there is no doubt that Olav Haraldsson's holiness was important for the dynasty and the monarchy on the coming years.<sup>226</sup> The cult that sprung up around Olav Haraldsson after his death became the turning point for the Christianisation of Norway as well as the unification process begun by King Harald Fairhair.<sup>227</sup> Steinsland's thesis is that it was the ideas and rites relating to the sacral ruler/kingdom in the Viking Age that provided the necessary tools for the people to interpret and understand the new religion, this came to be expressed through the cult of St. Olav. The old ideas of how the king should ensure 'ár ok frið' were revitalised.<sup>228</sup>

It was this cult that Eystein brought in to strengthen Magnus's kingship. In one way this submission under St. Olav and the sacrifice of the crown is an indication of the Church's desire to control the kingship. However, at no point in the *Letter* does the archbishop intrude on the relationship between the king and the saint; it is the king who is the saint's vicar. Paasche reads Magnus's submission as an attempt to shore up defence against King Valdemar's claim on Viken.<sup>229</sup> But, it can also be read as a defence against Sverre Sigurdsson. Emphasis is placed on his vassalage to a man that shed his blood and fought his enemies for the perseverance of the kingdom, he explicitly says that he 'will fight to preserve the country as St. Olav's patrimony'.<sup>230</sup> This means that, in Magnus's eyes, the country is indivisible, which means that to him this provides a legal basis for rejecting King Valdemar, and Sverre, when he suggests they share the kinship.<sup>231</sup> Parallels are drawn between the Holy Roman Emperors

---

<sup>224</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein* p. 121;

<sup>225</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, pp. 165-166

<sup>226</sup> Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 166

<sup>227</sup> Gro Steinsland. *Den hellige kongen. Om religion og herskermakt fra vikingtid til middelalder.* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2000) p. 13, p. 19

<sup>228</sup> Steinsland, *Den hellige kongen*, p. 19, p. 95; Sigurdsson, *Det norrøne samfunnet*, p. 29, Gunnes *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 121

<sup>229</sup> Paasche, 'Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme', p. 106

<sup>230</sup> *NMD Priv.*, p. 52

<sup>231</sup> Paasche, 'Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme', p. 106

vassalage to St. Peter and King Magnus's to St. Olav. Up until the coronation of Henry VII in 1312 the emperors had sworn oaths of fidelity to St. Peter, as evidenced in the coronation of Henry VI in 1191.<sup>232</sup> However, the Pope was, and still is, St. Peter's vicar, effectively meaning that the emperor owed obedience to both pope and saint. Magnus, on the other hand, had no one between himself and the saint. The clearest expression of the relationship between the king and the Church is in the *intitulatio*: 'Magnus, by God's grace Norway's King, greets Eystein, by the same grace archbishop'.<sup>233</sup> Had the archbishop been the middleman then his name would have appeared before Magnus's name.

The idea of a king having a saint as his liege is not unique to Norway. Gunnes believes that Eystein might have received inspiration from France, and particularly the work of Abbot Suger of Saint-Denis. The abbey was the burial place of St. Denis who over time came to be the patron saint of the French king, his dynasty, and the kingdom. Abbot Suger is commonly seen as an influential royal ideologist, a man whose driving force, in every aspect of his life, was the glorification of the Capetian monarchy. By extension he is often cast as the creator of the idea of France as a kingdom.<sup>234</sup>

In 1120 King Louis VI, with the queen, the court, and Conon the legate, went to the Abbey of Saint-Denis so that Louis could return the crown of Philip I, which he should have returned after his own coronation. Apparently, he felt so bad about this slip-up that along with the crown he gave the abbey the church of Cergy in the Vexin, and the liberty and *vicaria* of the court of Cergy. The crown was returned to St. Denis as '*dux et protector*' of the *regnum*.<sup>235</sup> Grant interprets Louis's trip to St-Denis in the light of the peace treaty negotiated between Louis and King Henry I of England by Pope Calixtus II in the same year. It was because of the peace treaty that Louis could afford to be so generous with the land in the Vexin.<sup>236</sup>

Four years later, when threatened by English and imperial forces, Louis returned to St-Denis, with his queen and his court. There, prayers were offered and the relics of

---

<sup>232</sup> Reginard Maxwell Woolley, *Coronation Rites*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), p. 49-51

<sup>233</sup> *NMD Priv.*, p. 50

<sup>234</sup> Lindy Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis: Church and State in Early Twelfth-Century France*, p. 4

<sup>235</sup> Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, p. 104

<sup>236</sup> Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, p. 104



the saint displayed on the altar of St. Denis. From this altar he took the banner of the county of the Vexin, marching forth as the bannerman of St. Denis, his '*dux et protector*', inviting all of France to follow him. According to Suger, the result of this was that princes came from all over France to his side, joining the French army facing the imperial forces.<sup>237</sup> The German emperor never showed, meaning that Louis won a bloodless victory over the Empire, and returned to Paris in triumph.<sup>238</sup>

I think this is something Suger probably made up, or certainly exaggerated. Firstly, Suger was not the abbot of St-Denis in 1120, which was a certain Adam. Secondly, we know that Suger was actively travelling in the years 1118 to 1122 on missions for the king, and it, therefore, highly unlikely he could have provided us with a first-hand account of the events in question.<sup>239</sup> I know that this is a bit sketchy, but keep in mind that Suger had a habit of exaggerate his own role and when he could not do that he remained quiet. Had he been present at such an important event for his abbey, he would surely have placed himself front and centre in the narrative.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, he may have had strong motivations for making this story up, in particular to boost the prestige of his abbey. Hence, what motivated him was not the glorification of the French kings; that just happened to be the by-product. He did it for the glory of St-Denis and making his abbey the most important in France, the '*caput regni*' as he claimed it to be, and asserting that its abbot was the primate of France, provided immense prestige for the abbey, it certainly helped that the abbey in 1119 was put under direct tutelage of Rome.<sup>241</sup> Thirdly, the special relationship between the French kings and St. Denis was not an invention by Suger in 1124, in fact, that relationship dated back to at least 1115, when Guibert of Nogent described St. Denis as 'the Lord of all France'.<sup>242</sup> All of this shows us that when it came to the glory of St-Denis, its abbot was willing to a lot to increase it.

---

<sup>237</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 122-123; Andrew W. Lewis, 'Suger's Views on Kingship' in *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis. A Symposium*, ed., Paula Lieber Gerson, (New York, 1987), p. 50; Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, pp. 111-113

<sup>238</sup> Ekkehard von Aura, *MGH Scriptorum*, ed. G. Pertz, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leipzig, 1925), VI, pp. 262-263; Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, p. 113

<sup>239</sup> Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, pp. 98, 105-106

<sup>240</sup> For instance between 1112 and 1118 we lose all trace of him. Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, p. 96

<sup>241</sup> Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, pp. 21, 108, 117-118, 102

<sup>242</sup> Grant, *Abbot Suger of St-Denis*, p. 15; J. F. Benton, *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoires of Abbot Guibert of Nogent*, (Toronto: Medieval Academy Reprints, 1984), p. 228

There was also a larger shadow looming over French kingship: Charlemagne, the royal ancestor. For Suger, he serves primarily as the papal idea of Frankish kingship in the service of the Holy See, not as a royal predecessor of King Louis VI. At some point in the 1100s unknown forgers at Saint-Denis created a letter of privileges from Charlemagne to the Abbey of Saint-Denis, in which he declared that he was the vassal of St. Denis and promised to pay an annual sum of four bezants in recognition of his vassalage. Furthermore, he supposedly declared that he had surrendered his crown to St. Denis whilst he was still alive. Essentially, Charlemagne was prepared to do what Louis VI was not.<sup>243</sup>

What makes the Charlemagne privileges so interesting to us, is how strikingly similar it is Magnus's *Letter of Privileges*. In some cases the wording is almost identical or so closely linked that it is easy to assume the author of the *Letter of Privileges*, Eystein, knew about the Charlemagne privileges.<sup>244</sup> Here follows just a few examples:

Charlemagne: 'I have laid my crown on the altar' and Magnus: 'And in testimony of the eternal submission I entrust my crown to the church for safekeeping; after my death it shall belong to the Church.'<sup>245</sup> Charlemagne: '[to St. Denis] I freely lay down the royal insignias for the kingdom of Francia, so that you hereafter shall have its kingship, that you shall have dominion there, and I offer four bezants to show that I have France in fee from God alone and of you.' The privileges of Magnus: 'To God and to the martyr King Olav I give today the kingdom of Norway, and I shall keep the kingdom as his patrimony, under his dominion and as his vicar.'<sup>246</sup>

The way I see it, if Eystein studied abroad, as Gunnes seems to think, he would have been in France in the 1140s, by then Suger had become abbot of St-Denis, and the events of the 1120s would have been within living memory.<sup>247</sup> Continuing on the same train of thought, why cannot Eystein have met Suger, we know that he befriended popes, why can he not befriend abbots? His teachers would have been amongst the brightest minds of their generation. Furthermore, the striking similarities to France, the work done by Abbot Suger and archbishop Eystein are in parts too similar to be purely coincidental. We have no definitive evidence, but the

---

<sup>243</sup> Anne A. Latowsky, *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Cornell University Press, 2013) pp. 222-223; Gunnes *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 123

<sup>244</sup> Gunnes *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 123-124

<sup>245</sup> *NMD, Priv.*, pp. 50-52

<sup>246</sup> *NMD, Priv.*, pp. 50-51

<sup>247</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 31

circumstantial evidence builds up and they all point in the same direction. Eystein, through his work, becomes a Norwegian Abbot Suger.<sup>248</sup>

Completing the trifecta is the *Law of succession*:

‘Here are the new laws that were enacted with counsel by King Magnus, archbishop Eystein and earl Erling and all the wisest men in Norway.’<sup>249</sup>

The headline makes it possible for us to give the law an approximate date. The inclusion of Erling Skakke means that it cannot be younger than 1179, for that is the year he died. The title of earl is a red herring: Erling received the title of earl when he took Viken and held it in fee from King Valdemar, and as we have shown above the chronology of those events are difficult to determine. The second clue lies in this; the law was ‘enacted with counsel by [...] and all the wisest men in Norway’<sup>250</sup>. Here we meet again the phrase ‘wisest men’, as we discussed above this is a common phrase that occurs quite often in legislation and literature. The words used here are ‘*vitrasto manna*’, which means it is essentially the same wording we found in the *Letter* above.<sup>251</sup> If it does refer to an assembly of magnates, we know of only two such meetings in this period: the one held in correlation with the founding of the Norwegian church province in 1152/53; and the one held at the time of the coronation of Magnus in 1163/64.<sup>252</sup> The text can be found in the main manuscript of the older *Law of Gulating* (*Codex Ranzowianus*) from 1250, moreover, it can also be found in a fragment of the older *Law of Gulating*’s ‘*kristenrett*’ and in a Danish translation of the older *Law of Frostating* from 1594, which shows that it has also been incorporated there. The law was passed at an assembly of magnates, and it describes Magnus Erlingsson as king. We know of only one such assembly from his reign and that was the one convened at the time of his coronation in 1163/4. The law of succession can therefore be dated to the period between 1163/4 and 1179, even though; the 1163/4 dating seems by far the most plausible.<sup>253</sup>

The *Law of succession* is made up of two parts. Part one is a definition of kingship and details how the succession is to be regulated if the king has legitimately born sons.

---

<sup>248</sup> Imsen, ‘Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker’, p. 19

<sup>249</sup> *NMD Succ.*, p. 32

<sup>250</sup> *NMD Succ.*, p. 32

<sup>251</sup> *NMD Succ.*, p. 33

<sup>252</sup> Knut Helle, *Konge og gode menn*, pp. 275-276

<sup>253</sup> Helle, *Konge og gode menn*, p. 275; Helle, *Norge blir en stat*, p. 38; Paasche, ‘Magnus Erlingssons kingedømme’, p. 197; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 112; *NMD Succ.*, p. 32

The eldest son is preferred, however, none of the sons are given an automatic right to succeed (cf. *Konungstekja*). It is followed by rules about how the succession is to be regulated if the king does not have legitimately born sons. Here, inheritance matters less and election, by clearly defined rules, becomes more prominent. The second part of the law is primarily made up by procedural rules that must be followed every time.<sup>254</sup>

‘It is from now onwards, that he shall be king of Norway who is a legitimately born son of the King of Norway, unless malice or ignorance takes power over him. If these things chase the oldest from the kingdom then his brother of the same father whom the archbishop and the suffragan bishops, and twelve of the wisest men from every diocese that they appoint with them, think is best suited to it, shall be king. And unlearned men should go to the decision with a sworn oath that they will take him to be king whom they before God think is best suited to it. But for this oath shall even the bishops, even if they do not swear, be held responsible to God, as they that do indeed swear, just as the unlearned who swears, adds the counsel of truth to this matter, so God give the ability to see what is right. If the King of Norway does not have a legitimate born son after him, he shall be the king whom, they who are appointed decides, is next in the succession, if he is suited for it. If he does not seem suitable, then he who the appointed think best suited to guard God’s right and the laws of the land shall be king. But if there is disagreement amongst them, then they who are in a majority, and who have the support of the archbishop and the other bishops, and they who consent with their oaths, shall decide.’

The ideological basis for this law was the Christian *rex iustus*-ideology as we will see shortly. It heralded a complete break with the old order – gone for good were now the days when brothers could share the dignity and prestige of kingship irrespective of birth. Firstly, you had to be of legitimate birth (legitimacy principle), and secondly preference was given to the oldest legitimate son of the king (primogeniture). However, this does not mean that primogeniture becomes the rule of the day. The royal offspring still had to have his suitability (*idoneus*-principle) for the task at hand assessed by an electoral college consisting of the clergy and representatives of the people. Therefore, being the oldest son was not in itself a guarantee to become king; anyone could be found unsuitable for the kingship.<sup>255</sup>

Where the coronation oath and the coronation, and in part the *Letter of Privileges*, define the new kingdom’s religious ideology, the *Law of succession* is the political future of the new kingdom. Short in length and written in Norse, it is pragmatic more

---

<sup>254</sup> Claus Krag, *Norges historie frem til 1319*, (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 2000), p. 114

<sup>255</sup> Claus Krag, *Norges historie frem til 1319*, p. 115; Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 112-113; Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, p. 167

than anything else. It includes aspects of the old, the many local assemblies is supplanted by one, and combines it with new ideological impulses from abroad, such as the legitimacy-principle and the suitability-principle. The law did away with the right of blood; in fact the royal blood lost its influence as the supernatural aspect of kingship shifted away from the king's person and to the king's office. The kingdom does not belong to one dynasty anymore, primogeniture and individual kingship (enkekongedømme) made sure of that. From now, the kingship was to be understood as an office and the king as an official. The shift towards a kingship under the influence of the *rex iustus*-ideology was complete.<sup>256</sup> Its intention was to avoid the chaotic succession of days of old and instead have a stabile and orderly succession. This was not to be. No succession took place according to these rules.<sup>257</sup>

\* \* \*

In this chapter the second of the three themes of this dissertation has been explored, namely how Norwegian kingship worked in practice. This was attempted in a tripartite manner; firstly, by establishing that creating a timeline for the first three to four years of Magnus's reign is nigh impossible, there is just too much disagreement amongst the sources. It was also discovered how short Snorre's account of the actual coronation was, in combination with which it became clear that Magnus's coronation oath was not an oath of fidelity to the pope it was argued that while the coronation oath and the coronation, and in part the *Letter of Privileges*, defined the new kingdom's religious ideology, the *Law of succession* was its political future. Together, these three documents completed the shift towards a kingship under the *rex iustus*-ideology. This tells us that having now secured the kingship for Magnus, they also tried to secure the future for his dynasty by effectively putting the Church in charge of the succession.

---

<sup>256</sup> Imsen, 'Erkebiskop Eystein som politiker', pp. 17-19; Bagge p. 167; Krag, *Norges historie*, p. 114

<sup>257</sup> Krag, *Norges historie*, p. 114

## Theme Three: Norwegian Kingship in context

### Introduction

This chapter explores the third and final theme as outlined in the introduction: Norwegian kingship in context. There are many ways for us to contextualise Magnus's kingship and in this chapter the focus will be on two things: acquisition, and by extension how to legitimise your rule once it has been acquired, and succession to kingship. Above it was explained how Erling and Eystein attempted to legitimise the newly acquired kingship of Magnus Erlingsson and to secure the succession for his descendants. Now, we will look for similarities in two kingdoms of great importance to Norway in this period, namely England and France.

England has been chosen because it is one of the examples mentioned by the author of the saga in the quote that starts off the first chapter as a country that has a crowned king. This can only mean that Snorre saw English kingship as something to emulate. The example in the saga drew special attention to King William the Conqueror, but for comparative purposes, rather than focus on just one king the intention here is to present kingship and succession in England between King William the Conqueror and King Henry II, the latter of whom was a contemporary of Magnus Erlingsson and had inherited his crown through the cognatic line. Furthermore, England is geographically close and several scholars have already explored the many cultural, ecclesiastical, economic, and political links between England and Norway in the Middle Ages.<sup>258</sup>

France in this period may have had less direct links with Norway but it was the leading cultural nation in Christendom and its capital was a centre for learning. We know that some of Eystein's contemporaries, such as John of Salisbury, studied in Paris, and if Eystein also studied there, as Gunnes suspects he might have, it could mean that some of the later events in Norway are directly inspired by French practices; interpreted and adapted by Eystein.<sup>259</sup> The Abbey of St. Victor and the Abbey of St. Genevieve in Paris were famous seats of learning, and just as St.

---

<sup>258</sup> For some examples of this literature, see Arne Odd Johnsen, *Kong Sverre og England 1199-1202* (Oslo, 1970); Jenny Benham, 'Philip Augustus and the Angevin Empire: the Scandinavian Connexion', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 14 (2005); H. G. Leach, *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921); E. M. Carus-Wilson, 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1962-3)

<sup>259</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, p. 34; p. 36

Genevieve became a centre for Danes, St. Victor became a centre for Norwegians seeking an education. We know of at least three Norwegians connected to St. Victor in the 1160s, Eirik Ivarsson, who succeeded Eystein as archbishop, and two by the name of Tore.<sup>260</sup>

### **Acquisition of kingship in England and France 1059 to 1189**

French kingship between 987 and 1327 succeeded without any significant disputes. This was because of the practice of primogeniture, and the luck of always having a ready direct male heir, and of associating the heir with the kingship during the father's lifetime. This associative kingship meant that not only was the succession not disputed, but it also ensured that when Louis VI succeeded his father in 1108 he was more experienced in the art of kingship than any of his contemporaries.<sup>261</sup> An example of this can be found with how Louis VI picked up the slack when his father became increasingly lethargic and morose. Another example is Louis VII, who, like King Stephen, was not his predecessor's intended heir. However, when he succeeded his father to the French kingship in 1137 he faced none of the problems of, say, Stephen. The intended heir had been his older brother Philip, their father's favourite child who was crowned junior king in 1129 in accordance with Capetian tradition. But Philip fell off his horse and died two years later, making Louis the heir. Furthermore, in France matter was helped by their reliance on the Church rather than being a war leader. Indeed as the French king was one of the smallest landholders in the kingdom, his ability to attract and reward men for military service was severely limited. Hence what kept the French kingship elevated was the cultivation of a mythical kingship, some of which we have touched upon in the previous chapters.

William the Conqueror is, probably, the most famous conqueror in history. He began as bastard duke of Normandy and ended up as king of the most well organised and richest kingdom in Christendom. William the Conqueror's claim is a study in itself, but we shall confine ourselves to say here that his claim is hedged by doubts regarding both the historical sources and the technicalities of English law. King Edward the Confessor's intention with regards to the English succession has puzzled historians as far back as William of Malmesbury, and one recent historian, Stephen

---

<sup>260</sup> Gunnes, *Erkebiskop Øystein*, pp. 87-88; Brooke, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, pp. 308-309; Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, p. 117

<sup>261</sup> Jordan, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, p. 55

Baxter, has commented that Edward's 'handling of the succession issue was dangerously indecisive, and contributed to one of the greatest catastrophes to which the English have ever succumbed.'<sup>262</sup> Irrespective of whether he had a legitimate claim or not, William went on to conquer the English kingdom. Hence it is perhaps simplest to say that William succeeded by right of conquest.<sup>263</sup>

William the Conqueror had nine children and three surviving sons; there is no evidence of any illegitimate children born to him.<sup>264</sup> The continuance of strong government was therefore far from certain. The rules of succession in Western Europe at the time were shaky at best. In some parts of France primogeniture was growing in popularity, whereas in other parts of Europe, such as England and Normandy, the tradition was Salic patrimony, the oldest son taking the patrimonial land, which was usually considered the most valuable, and younger sons got smaller, or recently acquired land.<sup>265</sup> In England, his second son William Rufus succeeded him. He has the distinction of being the only English king we are going to discuss here to have been the intended successor of his predecessor. Robert, the eldest, claimed Normandy as his paternal inheritance and he had also perhaps been designated duke of Normandy by his father. Why did not Robert succeed to both the kingship and the duchy? As we have just seen, primogeniture was not the established practise in either England or Normandy and so a succession based on this principle made no sense. This has not stopped historians from speculating though. For instance, Emma Mason has speculated that the reason why Robert did not succeed to the kingdom had something to do with his rebellious behaviour. In support, Mason cites the occasion in 1077 when Robert attempted to seize the castle of Rouen and plundered the county of Vexin before fleeing to his uncle in Flanders.<sup>266</sup> However, it is possible that William was just following the prevailing custom in Normandy and England.

The succession after William Rufus was anything but given. William died in a hunting accident in 1100. With him was his younger brother Henry, who immediately

---

<sup>262</sup> Stephen Baxter, 'Edward the Confessor and Succession Question' in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), p. 118

<sup>263</sup> Emma Mason, *Norman Kingship*, (Bangor: Headstart History, 1991), p. 1

<sup>264</sup> Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995), p. 59

<sup>265</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216 (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)*, (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1999), p. 162

<sup>266</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 3



rushed to Winchester to secure the treasury and then on to London to secure a coronation. The eldest brother, Robert, was returning from the First Crusade to defend his inheritance, with the eventual result that he ended up spending the rest of his life imprisoned by his youngest brother after losing the battle of Tinchebray in 1106. One could argue that hence it was swift action in 1100 and then the elimination of his rival that enabled Henry to acquire and secure his kingship. Rules, no matter how loose, did not outweigh political circumstance or ability to lead in war.

Henry I's only legitimate son and heir William Adelin perished in the White Ship disaster in 1120, jeopardizing the succession again. The king tried to no avail to have his daughter Matilda recognised as his heir, but, in the end, Henry was succeeded by his nephew Stephen of Blois, and left a disgruntled daughter who saw herself as the true heir of her father.<sup>267</sup> The disagreement over the succession would lead to the period known as the Anarchy (1135-1154), and it came to dominate Stephen's reign.

Of the claimants to the throne in 1135 upon Henry I's death, Stephen was the one best placed, and he showed that he was capable of swift action when he set out for England and secured the support of the Londoners – much like Henry had done before him.<sup>268</sup> By the end of December the same year, he had secured the crown and the kingdom, with the help of his brother Henry, abbot of Glastonbury and bishop of Winchester. Frank Barlow has referred to this decisive action as a coup d'état; in this he is of the same opinion as the contemporary chronicler Henry of Huntingdon, who believed Stephen had usurped the crown.<sup>269</sup> Edmund King, on the other hand, is less certain that this is an appropriate description.<sup>270</sup> In any case, what is clear is that scholars have seen Stephen accession to the throne as curious. He was not the oldest of his brother; Theobald was the oldest, and in Normandy the nobility had been prepared to declare Theobald king, seeing as he was the oldest grandson of William the Conqueror. However, when news arrived from England about Stephen's upcoming coronation, the support for Theobald evaporated. Again, the determining factor for succeeding to the English throne seems to have been swift action upon the death of the previous incumbent.

---

<sup>267</sup> Frank Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, p. 161

<sup>268</sup> Edmund King, *King Stephen*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 43

<sup>269</sup> Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, p. 1; George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure, 1066-1166*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 239; Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. Greenway, OMT (Oxford, 1996), p. 700

<sup>270</sup> Edmund King, *King Stephen*, pp. 46-47; 65

The events of the so-called Anarchy are not of particular interest to us, seeing as we are looking at acquisition of and succession to kingship, and we will therefore jump forward to the Treaty of Winchester between King Stephen and Henry FitzEmpress (the future Henry II) in 1153, which effectively ended it. In the treaty, Stephen recognised Henry as his adopted son and successor to the kingdom. In return, Henry would do homage to him, and Stephen's remaining son would do homage to Henry and renounce his claim to the throne in exchange for promises of security of his lands.<sup>271</sup> The treaty was facilitated by the fact that Stephen's intended heir, Eustace, died suddenly in the same year and that the barons on either side seemed reluctant to continue the fight over the succession when neither side seemed capable of outright military superiority.<sup>272</sup>

Henry II succeeded Stephen a year later in October 1154. He was quick to establish himself in England. Before the end of the year he and Eleanor had been crowned in Westminster, and by April the following year the nobility had sworn loyalty to him and his sons.<sup>273</sup> However, there were still potential rivals to his kingship, such as King Stephen's son William, and Henry's brothers Geoffrey and William. Henry was lucky, however, in that by the end of the decade they were all dead, leaving Henry in a remarkably secure position.<sup>274</sup> Nevertheless, it is clear that swift action to secure the throne and a coronation had again been at the forefront of how a candidate became king of England.

Comparing succession in England and France, it is immediately apparent that there is a difference in acquisition between the two kingdoms. France in this period emerges as one of the kingdoms with the most orderly succession, with the right to succeed nominally limited to the oldest surviving son. Acquisition of kingship in England on the surface appears to be the one with most similarities to affairs in Norway. However, whereas kingship in England after 1066 was limited to one dynasty at least, the descendants of William the Conqueror, the word dynasty does not seem to have had

---

<sup>271</sup> King, *King Stephen*, pp. 280-283

<sup>272</sup> J. Bradbury, *Stephen and Matilda: the Civil War of 1139-53*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), p. 183; David Crouch, *The Normans: The History of a Dynasty*, (London: Hambledon, 2002), p. 276; King, *King Stephen*, p. 277.

<sup>273</sup> Graeme J. White, *Restoration and Reform, 1153-1165: Recovery From Civil War in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5

<sup>274</sup> Graeme J. White, *Restoration and Reform, 1153-1165: Recovery From Civil War in England*, pp. 6-7

the same meaning in Norway, as discussed above, and therefore succession to the throne appears to be more of a ‘free-for-all.’ However, gaining the kingship is not the same as keeping it, so the final stage of this chapter will explore how various kings legitimised their rule once they attained the kingship.

## **Legitimising kingship**

This section will mainly concern itself with English kingship since we covered the most important parts of French kingship in the previous chapter. The kings of greatest interest for this discussion is William the Conqueror, Stephen, and Henry II, primarily because they all, in common with Magnus, were usurpers in one way or another and hence had to find ways to justify their own kingship.

Again, the discussion will start with William the Conqueror. One of the first things that William did after winning the battle of Hastings in 1066 was to organise his coronation. According to Carolly Erickson, European rulers traditionally projected themselves as being set apart from their subjects, in an attempt to avoid the threat of rebellion. They claimed that during their coronation, the anointing they received was what set them apart, as discussed in chapter one.<sup>275</sup> Beginning with his reign, the Norman kings would stress their title as ‘King of the English’, in contrast to their Anglo-Saxon predecessors who simply styled themselves as king.<sup>276</sup> We know for instance that charters of Edward the Confessor tended to start ‘Eadward cyning gret’ (‘King Edward greets’), whilst those of William refers to him as ‘rex Anglie’, ‘rex Anglorum’ or ‘Anglorum basileus’.<sup>277</sup>

The coronation in Westminster Abbey was not the first time William had been raised above his subjects. As Duke of Normandy he had been elevated in a local version of the *Laudes Regiae*, a ceremony of acclamation usually reserved for a king or an emperor.<sup>278</sup> This did not stop him from being crowned though, as it was his coronation as king and the anointing that actually raised him to a higher level.<sup>279</sup> From the evidence it looks like William wished to see his reign as a continuation of that of Edward the Confessor. Both Orderic Vitalis and William of Poitiers stressed in their

---

<sup>275</sup> Carolly Erickson, *The Medieval Vision: essays in history and Perception*, (Oxford, 1976), p. 129

<sup>276</sup> George Garnett, “‘Franci et Angli’: the legal distinctions between peoples after the Conquest”, *Anglo-Norman Studies VIII*, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge, 1986), p. 111

<sup>277</sup> For some examples from the reign of William I, see *Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154*, ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), nos. 26-8.

<sup>278</sup> H. E. J. Cowdrey, *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*, (London, 1984), VIII pp. 37-78

<sup>279</sup> Erickson, *The Medieval Vision*, pp. 129, 133

writings that the surviving Anglo-Saxon aristocracy ‘beg[ged] him to take the crown, saying they are used to serving a king, and they wished to have a king as lord.’<sup>280</sup> Furthermore, his followers had a vested interest in having him crowned, because, according to William of Poitiers, they would never have wanted his elevation as monarch unless he had been ‘outstandingly suitable’.<sup>281</sup> Ultimately, what William’s claim to kingship was built upon was not the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy’s willingness to have him as their king, at that point their opinion hardly mattered, but that Edward the Confessor had bequeathed the kingdom to him. This meant that it had become William’s, and his alone, by hereditary right.<sup>282</sup> However, he could only secure his inheritance by becoming king. The coronation of the Conqueror thus bestowed upon him the legitimacy that ratified his right by conquest and increased his effectiveness in the exercise of power in England.<sup>283</sup>

In the end, however, what determined that William could keep the throne was the combination of his military victory at Hastings, the putting down of the rebellion(s) in 1069-70 with the subsequent lack of any convincing rivals, and the coronation by the Archbishop of York, a coronation that was orchestrated to conform to English expectations and fulfil Norman objectives.<sup>284</sup>

Matilda, William’s wife, was eventually consecrated as queen in May 1068. The *Laudes Regiae* used at her consecration drew an analogy between the heavenly hierarchy and that on earth, with the king prominently named. Nelson believes, and Mason seems to agree, that the ritual used in 1068 was the work of Ealdred, Archbishop of York, who had travelled extensively in German territory, because it is possible to discern the influence of the German *Laudes Regiae*.<sup>285</sup> This would indicate that William’s new royal status was enhanced by emulating, not the Capetian kings to the south, but the German Emperors to the east.<sup>286</sup>

---

<sup>280</sup> George Garnett, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure, 1066-1166*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 4; William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and M. M. Chibnall, OMT (Oxford, 1998), p. 148; *The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. M. Chibnall, 6 vols., OMT (Oxford, 1969-80), ii, p. 182

<sup>281</sup> William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, p. 148

<sup>282</sup> Garnett, *Conquered England*, p. 5; William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, pp. 20, 68, 76, 118, 120

<sup>283</sup> Garnett, ‘Coronation and Propaganda’, p. 93, Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, p. 377

<sup>284</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 3; Janet Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in the Early Medieval Europe*, (London: Hambledon, 1986), p. 377

<sup>285</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 6; Janet Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, p. 398

<sup>286</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 6; Nelson, *Politics and Ritual*, p. 398

To further enhance his kingship, William, according to William of Malmesbury's *Vita Wulfstani*, instituted a new custom of seasonal crown wearing:

‘King William had brought in a custom which his successors followed for a while and then allowed to lapse: this was the that three times a year all the magnates met together at his court, to discuss the essential business of the realm, and at the same time behold the king in his glory, wearing his crown set with precious stones.’<sup>287</sup>

William of Malmesbury post-dates the introduction of the ceremony as there is some evidence of crown wearings in late Anglo-Saxon England. The ceremonial followed much the same pattern in the reigns of William and his sons, as it had in the reign of Edward the Confessor. The greater Anglo-Saxon churches had a ‘west work’, with a balcony, which allowed the crowned king to make a formal appearance to the people. This gave the local population an opportunity to be impressed by the manifestation of royal majesty. Politically it was necessary to convey this visual imagery to the great men of the realm, and for that purpose a large palace became just as essential as a large church. Edward the Confessor’s move from London to Westminster should be understood in this light.<sup>288</sup> The crown wearing served as a forum in which matters of political consequence were debated by the king and the powerful men of the realm. Hence, the purpose of the crown wearing was to remind the barons that the king claimed to assert an authority on a higher level than their own, and the spectacular ceremony was designed to prompt acquiescence in his policies.<sup>289</sup> What is evident from all of this is that, rules and legitimacy, even once confirmed at a coronation and crown wearings, did not outweigh politics and military leadership but they were useful tools in creating an image that promulgated that the transfer of kingship from Edward to William had happened as it should have.

Moving on to the kingship of Stephen, it should be noted that other scholars have drawn comparisons between Magnus and Stephen. For instance, Fredrik Paasche compared Magnus’s precarious situation to that of Stephen with regards to the

---

<sup>287</sup> *The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, ed. R. R. Darlington, Camden Third Series, 40, (1928), p. 34

<sup>288</sup> W. L. Warren, *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England 1086-1272*, (London, 1987), p. 17, Mason, *Norman Kingship*, pp. 7-10; M. Biddle, ‘Seasonal Festivals and Residence: Winchester, Westminster and Gloucester in the tenth and twelfth Centuries’, *Anglo-Norman Studies VIII. Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1985*, ed. R. Allen Brown, (Woodbridge, 1986), pp. 59, 69

<sup>289</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 8

coronation: 'in both Norway and England the consecration is used to assert the king's right.'<sup>290</sup>

Stephen had much in common with his predecessors because like William I and Henry I, he seized the crown in the face of rivals: William I from Harold Godwinson and Henry I from Robert Curthose. Furthermore, like Henry before him, Stephen too rushed to secure the treasury before presenting his rivals with a *fait accompli*: he had been accepted as king by the Londoners, by his brother Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, and by Roger, bishop of Salisbury and chancellor to Henry I.<sup>291</sup> Additionally, like Henry I, he had married a kinswoman of King Edward in a further attempt to legitimise his claim.<sup>292</sup> Stephen thus became king for the lack of any better candidates. Matilda may well have been Henry's only surviving legitimate heir, but her marriage to Geoffrey of Anjou compromised her position. Robert, earl of Gloucester, bastard son of Henry I, was another potential candidate. However, whilst William the Conqueror had famously been a bastard, the Church's position on legitimacy had evolved since his reign and was making Robert's claim unlikely to succeed.<sup>293</sup> Hence it was that, by moving fast and by default, Stephen came out as the winner, and once crowned, he proved very difficult to budge. As Stephen himself declared in a charter from 1136, the clergy and the people had elected him into the kingdom, consecrated by the archbishop of Canterbury, who was also the papal legate, and confirmed by the Pope.<sup>294</sup> He also tried to enhance his position by pointing out he was the nearest male heir of his predecessor by referring to him as 'my uncle, King Henry'.<sup>295</sup> He had thus acquired the throne with dazzling assurance and with as much legality as any of his predecessors, particularly the three Norman kings.<sup>296</sup>

Throughout his reign Stephen had to contend with the question of legitimacy, his reign had after all, if we were to take Barlow's stance, begun with a *coup d'état*. However, at Westminster Abbey the prior Osbert of Clare was working on something

---

<sup>290</sup> Paasche, 'Magnus Erlingssons kongedømme', p. 104

<sup>291</sup> M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1307* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.), (Malden, MA; Oxford; Carlton, Vic.: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), p. 108

<sup>292</sup> Christopher Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (Blackwell, 1967), p. 191

<sup>293</sup> M. T. Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1307*, p. 108

<sup>294</sup> 'Stephen's 1136 Charter of Liberties for the Church', in *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, ed. W. Stubbs, 9<sup>th</sup> edn. revised by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), p. 143.

<sup>295</sup> William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9<sup>th</sup> edn, rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford, 1921), p. 142.

<sup>296</sup> Clanchy, *England and its Rulers 1066-1307*, p. 109

that might just help: a saint's life of Edward the Confessor – the last legitimate Anglo-Saxon kings. The cults of royal saints served a valuable political purpose in the pre-Conquest centuries, with the kings Edward the Martyr (975-8) and Edmund of East Anglia (c. 855-69) enjoying important followings. However, after 1066, whilst the incoming French higher clergy was quick to recognise the value of these cults, the new royal house did not share their enthusiasm for they saw no political potential in them.<sup>297</sup> Nor was readiness to utilise the 'law of King Edward' matched by royal enthusiasm for the cult of the king whose legitimate successors the Norman kings claimed to be.<sup>298</sup> There were many reasons behind this complex Norman reaction to saints venerated by the Anglo-Saxons. The Normans were not opposed to the veneration of Anglo-Saxon saints; in some cases they were eager to promote legitimate cults because of the dearth of Norman saints.<sup>299</sup> Such a cult was the cult that grew out the veneration of King Edward the Confessor after his death.

After 1066 there was a subdued cult of Edward the Confessor as a saint, possibly discouraged by the early Norman abbots of Westminster, which gradually increased in the early twelfth century.<sup>300</sup> By 1138 Osbert had converted the eleventh-century *Vita Edwardis Regis* into a conventional saint's life, and ignored the role of Godwin, father of Harold, and his family in royal government so as to bring to the fore the rights of the dukes of Normandy to succeed the Confessor. A year later, in 1139, Osbert went to Rome to petition for Edward's canonisation, with the support of King Stephen.<sup>301</sup> However, he lacked the full support of the English hierarchy and Stephen had quarrelled with the Church, causing Pope Innocent II to postpone the decision on the grounds that Osbert lacked the necessary testimonials of Edward's holiness.<sup>302</sup>

Even though Stephen failed to canonise King Edward, the association with his kingship continued. Stephen mentioned him in his coronation charter where he

---

<sup>297</sup> Susan J. Ridyard, *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 250-251

<sup>298</sup> Mason, *Norman Kingship*, p. 39

<sup>299</sup> Emily L. O'Brien, *The Cult of St. Edward the Confessor*, (Oxford, 2001), p. 28

<sup>300</sup> Peter Rex, *King & Saint: The Life of Edward the Confessor*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2008), pp. 214-217

<sup>301</sup> Martin Aurell, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2007), p. 135; Frank Barlow, *Edward the Confessor*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1970), pp. xxiv, 274, 283-284

<sup>302</sup> Edina Bozoky, 'The Sanctity and Canonisation of Edward the Confessor' in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009), pp. 180-181

promised to uphold the law and good customs of King Edward.<sup>303</sup> However, the document of most interest to us is the *Legis Edwardi Confessoris*, which recent scholarship has proved to be a work, not of Anglo-Saxon origin, but of later origin, after 1096 and before 1175, most likely during Stephen's reign.<sup>304</sup> Bruce O'Brien, the most recent editor of the laws, in a more recent article goes even further and dates it to a year or two after 1136, pointing out that Stephen invoked the *laga Edwardi* at the beginning of his reign as his legal benchmark.<sup>305</sup> His predecessors had been conscious about their connection to King Edward and never failed to emphasise that connection. Stephen was no exception to this rule, in fact, he, more than any of his predecessors, was conscious about this connection, almost to the point of zealousness. Whenever he could link his kingship to King Edward he did. For instance, in a letter to Pope Innocent II requesting sainthood for King Edward, he referred to the familial connection between Edward and himself.<sup>306</sup>

Like Magnus, Stephen thus associated his reign with a royal saint. In Stephen's case this association proved more successful in that Stephen never lost the kingship (*regis nomen*). Furthermore, like Magnus, Stephen sought protection in coronation against his adversaries. The Normans placed a great importance on the office of consecration: the ceremony was vitally important in establishing the king's legitimacy and the Normans were loath to depose a consecrated king.<sup>307</sup> Both Stephen and Matilda could claim familial connections to King Edward, but only Stephen had been consecrated like Edward before him. Furthermore, the consecration connecting the two had literally taken place on top of King Edward's bones.

When it came to the canonisation of Edward the Confessor, conditions were more favourable for Henry II. In 1159 there was a dispute over the papal election, and Henry's support aided the election of Alexander III. The following year, the new abbot of Westminster then seized the opportunity to revive Edward's claim to

---

<sup>303</sup> 'Stephen's Coronation Charter', in William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9th edn, rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford, 1921), p. 142.

<sup>304</sup> Bruce O'Brien, *God's Peace & King's Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor*, (Philadelphia, 1999), pp. 44-48

<sup>305</sup> Bruce O'Brien, 'Legal Treatises as Perception of Law', in *King Stephen's Reign (1135-1154)*, ed. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), p. 186

<sup>306</sup> Osbert of Clare, *The Letters of Osbert of Clare*, ed. E. W. Williamson (Oxford, 1929), p. 86

<sup>307</sup> George Garnett, 'Coronation and Propaganda: Some Implications of the Norman Claim to the Throne of England in 1066: The Alexander Prize Essay', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 36 (1986), pp. 95-99



sainthood and this time around the English clergy offered its full support along with the king, and a grateful pope issued the bull of canonisation.<sup>308</sup> Now, Edward never became a popular saint in twelfth- and thirteenth-century England, he was, after all, an Anglo-Saxon king. Nevertheless, he was important to the Norman and Plantagenet dynasties who claimed to be the legitimate successors of the last legitimate Anglo-Saxon king.<sup>309</sup> The canonisation certainly benefitted Henry and his project of rebuilding the kingdom in his image. In fact, Kemp and Robinson suspect a possible political motivation behind the swift canonisation of Edward the Confessor, with Pope Alexander repaying Henry for his support by granting sainthood to King Edward.<sup>310</sup> Their view has some support in the view held by the biographer of St. Edward, Ailred of Rievaulx, who in his prologue attributes the canonisation of Edward to Henry's support and royal authority.<sup>311</sup>

The canonisation of Edward was meant to be the culmination of the fusion of Anglo-Saxons and Normans. In that regard Henry finished the work begun by his great-grandfather and grandfather, who both had cherished the memory of Edward. They had venerated Edward the king through whom Anglo-Saxon kingship had been passed on to the dukes of Normandy. They showed their respect for Edward by the ample endowment to his favourite monastery and burial place. Furthermore, the symbolic act of being crowned, literally on top of him, clearly showed how they viewed their kingships as a continuation of his own.<sup>312</sup>

The Norman kings solved the problem of legitimacy by literally being crowned on top of the grave of the last Anglo-Saxon king they recognised as a legitimate ruler, and then they proceeded to have him canonised thus adding the prestige of the saint to their own.

\* \* \*

So, what can be concluded from all of this? Clearly, succession to the kingship was handled differently in the kingdom of England to that of France. The English kings attempted to deal with the thorny issue of the succession by emulating French

---

<sup>308</sup> Bozoky, 'The Sanctity and Canonisation of Edward the Confessor', p. 173

<sup>309</sup> Bozoky, 'The Sanctity and Canonisation of Edward the Confessor', pp. 180-182

<sup>310</sup> Bernhard W. Scholz, 'The Canonization of Edward the Confessor', *Speculum*, 36, No. 1 (Jan., 1961) p. 50

<sup>311</sup> Bernhard W. Scholz, 'The Canonization of Edward the Confessor', p. 53

<sup>312</sup> Scholz, 'The Canonization of Edward the Confessor', p. 55

practices and trying to have their heir crowned during the lifetime of the father. For instance, Stephen tried to have his son Eustace crowned as junior king, but the Church, with which he fell out, vetoed him.<sup>313</sup> Similarly, Henry II had his oldest son Henry the Young King crowned in 1170, but the plan for the succession came to nothing when Henry the Young King died in 1183 and the son who eventually succeeded to the kingdom was Henry II's third oldest son, Richard. The curious thing about these two attempts is not that neither was successful but rather that afterward 1189 no English king tried to go down that route again. The French had none of the problems of the English; until 1327 they always seemed to have a ready direct male heir, and a spare to that.

---

<sup>313</sup> R. H. C. Davis, *King Stephen*, (London: Longman, 1977), p. 105; Keith J. Stringer, *The Reign of Stephen: Kingship, Warfare and Government in Twelfth-Century England*, (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 68; King, *King Stephen*, pp. 263-264

## Conclusion

This dissertation set out to attempt to answer three questions concerning Norwegian kingship: How does Norwegian kingship work in theory? How does Norwegian kingship work in practice? And, how does Norwegian kingship work in context with other European kingdoms? By answering these three questions, the intention has been to study Norwegian state development, here represented by Magnus's kingship, in a European perspective, just as Hans Jacob Orning argues it should be.<sup>314</sup>

In chapter one, we tried to offer an answer as to how Norwegian kingship worked in theory. The focus of the analysis was the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, exploring this in two parts: in the first part we examined the rules surrounding the making of a king in Norway as portrayed by the narrative sources, whilst in the second part we looked at the possible motivations behind the coronation of Magnus Erlingsson, centred, in particular, on the exchange between Earl Erling Skakke and Archbishop Eystein as written down by Snorri in the *Saga of Magnus Erlingsson*. We therefore began by examining the exchange between Erling and Eystein because the account raises many interesting points and arguments, which, by exploring, can be used to answer the overarching question in that chapter: how Norwegian kingship worked in theory. First, we discussed the ancient customs, the *Konungstekja*. We found that this was the way kings acceded to the kingship through the kin-right held by all the king's sons since the days of Harald Fairhair. This was a kin-right Magnus lacked seeing as he was not a king's son. Magnus could therefore not have presented his claim at an ordinary assembly of the people. This presented Erling and Magnus with a problem of legitimacy. Kingship in these times rested on the consent of the king's subjects, without which Magnus could not rule. Consequently, the parties involved had to find a way around this consent. Furthermore, we found that Snorre's use of the word 'custom' was not entirely correct. The dynasty that Snorre portrays did not exist, at least not after the death of Harald Greyfell in 976. This means that at some point the lineages of Olav Tryggvason and Olav Haraldsson have been spruced up so that they would appear to be descendants of Harald Fairhair. The first king who does not try to trace his lineage as far back as that is Harald Hadrada, who instead is content with tracing his lineage to his (half)-brother St. Olav. I have therefore no problem with agreeing with those scholars who see the Fairhair-dynasty in its widest extent as a

---

<sup>314</sup> Orning, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling', p. 212

construct and hence the theory of the ancestry of a king was just that – a theory. The dynasty Magnus cognatically belonged to then was the Hardrada-dynasty. From there, this paper moved on to explore the succession after the death of King Inge in 1161 to determine who the other claimants to the throne were and the validity of their claims. Magnus was not the only possible candidate for the followers of King Inge; in the end he prevailed because of who his father was. Then we discussed the distinction between kingship and regency, and found that the distinction lies in the rules applied. The rules dictated that the kingship belonged to one particular kindred, and the magnates respected this.

From here we returned to the points and arguments from the conversation between Erling and Eystein, and discussed the value of being anointed. Here, we found that an anointed king is much harder to dislodge than one who is not, because it marked him out as God's vicar on Earth and carried with it ecclesiastical sanction for the kingship. Furthermore, the consecration meant that the Church recognised the king's rule, and for a king ascending to the kingship without hereditary right this was quite valuable. The ecclesiastical sanction became a constituent factor for rulers not supported by hereditary right, such as Magnus. This was why Erling sought to have Magnus consecrated and crowned. We moved on by discussing why Magnus's legitimate birth was important to Erling. By now legitimate birth had become a canonical qualification for the royal office, and Erling was just pointing out Magnus's advantage over his rivals. Then we discussed the protection afforded by consecration. Finally, we discussed possible motivations for having Magnus crowned, now focusing especially on the archbishop. Eystein perhaps saw Erling as desperate, and he seized upon the chance to implement a good deal of the ideas surrounding the Gregorian reform movement. This shows that this was two men faced with two different tasks but who chose a path of pragmatic alliance.

In the second chapter, we explored the second of the three themes of this dissertation, namely how Norwegian kingship worked in practice. This we did in a tripartite manner; first, we established that creating a timeline for the first three to four years of Magnus's reign is nigh impossible, there is just too much disagreement amongst the sources. We, furthermore, discussed Magnus's coronation. Since Snorre's foster-father had been present at the ceremony it meant that he had access to a witness account. Knowing this makes what Snorre actually say about the coronation so

frustrating: he says so little, and it tells us almost nothing. What we were able to discern from Snorre's account of the event is that Eystein was the *coronator*, and not the papal legate who under normal circumstances should have been the *coronator*. *Sverre's saga*, on the other hand, gives two different accounts, first it says the papal legate consecrated Magnus, and later it says Eystein and the papal legate did it together. However, in both instances it is Magnus himself who is using the consecration to legitimise his own rule. Then we discovered that Magnus swore an oath. Even though, since he was a minor, Erling and twelve landed men swore the oath with him. Despite the wording in the oath itself, it is not to be understood as an oath of fealty to the papacy. A study and comparison of two such oaths, that of Robert Guiscard in 1059 and that of King John of England in 1213 show this. Both oaths represent occasions when the political circumstances of both parties were such that oaths of fidelity were extremely beneficial to both. The coronation of Magnus was not such an occasion. It might have been mutually beneficial for the papal legate to witness to the coronation and hence also confirming the authority of Pope Alexander, but it did not require an oath of fidelity. Additionally, it became clear that it is impossible to know what the coronation oath meant by Adrian's stipulations. The oath evidently alludes to the *rex iustus*-ideology in its third paragraph and in the fourth the oath alludes to the *libertas ecclesiae*-ideology. Both are new ideas that can only have been introduced by someone from the outside – Eystein being the most likely candidate for this based on his European education. We also know that Magnus's coronation oath was not unique. For instance, by comparing it to that of King Henry I of England we found some similarities in that they both contain the idea of protecting the weak and innocent, and the church. The coronation oath contains a clear indication that it was perceived as increasing the right of King Magnus to the kingdom. It would also seem that the coronation was a compromise between Erling and Eystein. Eystein was a convinced Gregorian; Erling was not. Yet he consented to the constitutional powers it granted to Eystein as archbishop to implement canonical law as interpreted by the Gregorian Pope Alexander III to whom he had just sworn loyalty. Taking the ecclesiastical connection even further, in the *Letter of Privileges*, Magnus becomes the first Norwegian king to describe himself as king by God's grace. However, the most remarkable part of the *Letter* is perhaps his submission to St. Olav. This represents a further step towards the *rex iustus*-ideology begun in the coronation oath. The royal saints are a new actor in European ideology and St. Olav is the only

royal saint in Norway. Eystein seems to have brought in the cult of St. Olav to strengthen Magnus's kingship. It should not be seen as an attempt by the Church to control the kingship for Eystein never intruded on the relationship between the king and the saint. The submission can both be read as a defence against King Valdemar's claim on Viken and Sverre Sigurdsson's claim on the kingdom since Magnus explicitly states he would fight to preserve the country as St. Olav's patrimony, providing Magnus with a legal basis to reject both claims. The idea of submitting to a saint is again not unique to Norway. Parallels can be drawn both to the Holy Roman Emperor until 1312 and the Capetian kings, for instance King Louis VI. To seal the deal he had just made with St. Olav, Magnus sacrificed his crown at the altar for affirmation and after his death his and all of his successors's crowns shall be surrendered to the Church. This is quite remarkable and seems to indicate that it was not inheritance or dynastic considerations that would determine the succession in the future but the Church. This is a significant concession and shows that Magnus and Erling must have been pretty desperate to agree to it. The last document we discussed was the *Law of Succession*. The wording in the beginning of the text makes it possible to plausibly date the law to the same time as the coronation of Magnus. In it, we again met the *rex iustus*-ideology, but it also introduced something new to the kingdom of Norway, namely the idea of legitimate birth as a requirement for succession, strict primogeniture succession, and the *idoneus*-principle to rule over the right of succession. To become king the pretender had to fulfil all of these criteria, with the final arbitrator being the Church. Again, being the oldest son did not guarantee kingship, as anyone could be found unsuitable. This requirement about suitability, however, means that the succession was not really according to the rules of primogeniture. It only meant that the oldest son had the right to have his claim tested first. Where the coronation oath and the coronation, and in part the *Letter of Privileges*, define the new kingdom's religious ideology, the *Law of succession* is the political future of the new kingdom. Together these three documents completed the shift towards a kingship under the *rex iustus*-ideology.

In the third and final chapter we cast our eyes abroad in an attempt to place Norwegian kingship in the context of European kingdoms, here represented by England and France. England was chosen because Snorre saw English kingship as something to emulate, hence a discussion of the line of kings from the Conquest in

1066 up to the reign of King Henry II (1154-1189), while France was chosen because of its status as the cultural capital of the medieval West in the twelfth century and as the place where Eystein may have been educated. The discussion in this chapter was specifically focused on two aspects of kingship: acquisition, and by extension legitimising said acquired kingship, and succession. The intention was to compare and contrast practices, to discover the extent to which the actions of Erling and Eystein were unique in a European context.

Kingship in France between 987 and 1327 succeeded without any significant disputes. This was because the Capetian kings practised succession through primogeniture and they were lucky enough to always have a direct male heir and a spare. Furthermore, the practice of associative kingship meant that not only was the succession not disputed but when the son eventually succeeded, he was far more experienced than any of his contemporaries in the affairs of state. In addition, French kingship relied on the Church since they held or controlled little land directly. What ensured the elevated position and survival of the French kings was the cultivation of a mythical kingship and their tendency to outlive everyone else.

The Norman duke, by contrast, conquered England. His descendants then spent the next 150 years or so trying to work out the thorny issue of the succession. It was not, however, until the succession of Henry III in 1216 that the oldest son succeeded his father. In England, the most common way to acquire the kingship was seemingly based on military might, and therefore attempts were made to emulate the Capetian practice of associative kingship. This failed both times it was tried, and it was never attempted again after the death of King Henry II in 1189. Stephen, and to a lesser extent Henry, attempted to legitimise his kingship in much the same way that Magnus did, through coronation oath setting out specific promises, through agreement with the Church, through association with a royal saint, and through legislative works.

The sum of all this leads me to the conclusion that the way Erling Skakke seized the kingship for his son and how he attempted to shore up his son's lack of legitimacy through an alliance with a Church heavily influenced by the Gregorian reform movement is, in a Norwegian context, exceptional.

In a European context Magnus's kingship appears to fit into the trends of the times. With the exception of the *Law of Succession*, the changes brought about by Magnus's

kingship seem to emulate what was happening elsewhere in the Medieval West. Further study into this, with a broader scope than this dissertation – perhaps looking at kingship in Norwegian, Scandinavian and European contexts – could determine exactly how exceptional Magnus’s kingship truly was.

Finally, it could be noted about Magnus’s kingship that had Erling not been Magnus’s father, or had Magnus been older, or had Eystein not been as willing to take advantage of the situation – the list of ‘what ifs’ could go on endlessly – only proves to us the importance of being at the right place at the right time.



## Bibliography

### Primary sources

‘Henry I’s coronation charter’ in *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9<sup>th</sup> edn., ed. W. Stubbs; rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921)

‘King John’s Concession of the Kingdom to the Pope’, in *Selected Letters of Pope Innocent III, concerning England (1198-1216)*, (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1956)

‘Laws of Edward the Confessor’ in Bruce O’Brien, *God’s Peace and King’s Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor* (Philadelphia, 1999)

‘Oath Robert Guiscard to Pope Nicholas II’ in J.J. Norwich, *The Normans in the South* (Harlow: Longman, 1967)

‘Stephen’s charter of Ecclesiastical privileges’ in *Select Charters and Other Illustrations of English Constitutional History*, 9<sup>th</sup> edn., ed. W. Stubbs, rev. by H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921)

Barlow, Frank, ed. *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster Attributed to a Monk of Saint-Bertin* (2nd ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)

Ekkehard von Aura, MGH Scriptorum, ed. G. Pertz, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Leipzig, 1925)

*Forsvarstale for kong Sverre mot bispane*, tr. Eirik Eggen (Oslo: Det norske samlaget, 1940)

Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. D. Greenway, OMT (Oxford, 1996)

*Norske Middelalderdokumenter*, eds., Sverre Bagge, Knut Helle, and Synnøve Holstad Smedsdal (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1973)

*Orkneyinga saga: Legenda de sancto Magno, Magnúss saga Skemmri, Magnúss saga Lengri, Helga tháttir ok Úlfs*, ed., Finnbogi Guðmundsson (Reykjavik: Hið Íslenska Fornritafélag, 1965)

Osbert of Clare, *The Letters of Osbert of Clare*, ed. E. W. Williamson (Oxford, 1929)

Regesta Regum Anglo-Normannorum, 1066-1154, ed. H. W. C. Davis (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913)

Saxo Grammaticus, *Danorum Regum Heroumque Historia. Books X-XVI: the Text of the First Edition with Translation and Commentary*, 3 vols., ed. Eric Christiansen, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 84 and 118 (Oxford: British Archaeological Reports, 1980-1)

Saxo Grammaticus, *The History of the Danes, Book I-IX*, 2 vols., ed., Peter Fisher and Hilda R. Ellis Davidson (Woodbridge; Rochester, NY: Brewer, 1980)

Sturluson, Snorri, *Heimskringla: History of the King of Norway*, tr. Lee M. Hollander (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011)

*Sverres saga. En tale mot biskopene*, tr. Anne Holtsmark (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1961)

*Sverris saga*, ed., Thorleifur Hauksson, Íslensk fornrit, XXX (Reykjavík: Hið íslenska fornritafélag, 2007)

*The Annals of Roger de Hoveden: Comprising the History of England and of Other Countries of Europe from A.D. 732 to A.D. 1201, vol. II, A.D. 1181 to A.D. 1201*, ed., Henry T. Riley (London: H. G. Bohn, 1853)

*The Ecclesiastical History of Orderic Vitalis*, ed. M. M. Chibnall, 6 vols., OMT (Oxford, 1969-80)

*The Orkneyinga saga*, ed., A. B. Taylor (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1938)

*The Vita Wulfstani of William of Malmesbury*, ed. R. R. Darlington, Camden Third Series, 40, (1928)

William of Poitiers, *Gesta Guillelmi*, ed. R. H. C. Davis and M. M. Chibnall, OMT (Oxford, 1998)

## **Secondary sources**

Aurell, Martin, *The Plantagenet Empire 1154-1224*, (Harlow: Pearson, 2007)

Bagge, Sverre, 'Den heroiske tid – kirkereform og kirkekamp 1153-1214', Imsen, Steinar (ed.), *Ecclesia Nidrosiensis 1153-1537. Søkelys på Nidaroskirkens og Nidarosprovinsens historie*, Senter for Middelalderstudier, NTNU. Skrifter no. 5 (Trondheim 2003), pp. 47-80

- Bagge, Sverre, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom: State Formation in Norway, c. 900-1350* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2010)
- Bagge, Sverre, *Society and Politics in Snorri Sturluson's Heimskringla* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1991)
- Bagge, Sverre, *From gang leader to the Lord's anointed: kingship in Sverris saga and Hákonar saga Hákonarsonar*, (Odenese: Odenen University Press, 1996)
- Barlow, Frank, *The Feudal Kingdom of England, 1042-1216* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.), (Harlow: Pearson Education, 1999)
- Benham, Jenny, 'Philip Augustus and the Angevin Empire: the Scandinavian Connexion', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 14 (2005)
- Benson, Robert L., 'Images of David in Psalters and Bibles. Medieval Interpretations of Biblical Kingship as Mirrored in Art' in *Law, Rulership and Rhetoric: Selected Essays of Robert L. Benson*, ed. Loren J. Weber, Giles Constable and Richard H. Rouse (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 131-157
- Benson, Robert L., 'Images of Rulership on a Romanesque Chalice from Trzemeszno' in *Law, Rulership and Rhetoric: Selected Essays of Robert L. Benson*, ed. Loren J. Weber, Giles Constable and Richard H. Rouse (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 158-181
- Benton, J. F., *Self and Society in Medieval France: The Memoires of Abbot Guibert of Nogent*, (Toronto: Medieval Academy Reprints, 1984)
- Biddle, M., 'Seasonal Festivals and Residence: Winchester, Westminster and Gloucester in the tenth and twelfth Centuries', *Anglo-Norman Studies VIII. Proceedings of the Battle Conference 1985*, ed. R. Allen Brown, (Woodbridge, 1986)
- Bjork, Robert E., ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Middle Ages* vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)
- Boserup, Ivan, ed., *Saxostudier. Saxo-kollokvierne ved Københavns universitet* (Copenhagen, 1975)

- Bozoky, Edina, 'The Sanctity and Canonisation of Edward the Confessor' in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009)
- Bradbury, J., *Stephen and Matilda: the Civil War of 1139–53*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2009)
- Brekke, Egil Nygaard, 'Magnus Erlingssons korningsår', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)* 40 (1960)
- Brooke, Christopher, *Europe in the Central Middle Ages 962-1154*, (Burnt Mill: Longman, 1981)
- Brooke, Christopher, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), (Blackwell, 1967)
- Carus-Wilson, E. M., 'The Medieval Trade of the Ports of the Wash', *Medieval Archaeology*, 6-7 (1962-3)
- Clanchy, M. T., *England and its Rulers 1066-1307*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006)
- Corner, David, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts of Roger of Howden's 'Chronica'', *English Historical Review*, 98 (1983)
- Cowdrey, H. E. J., *Popes, Monks and Crusaders*, (London, 1984), VIII
- Crouch, David, *The Normans: The History of a Dynasty*, (London: Hambledon, 2002)
- Davis, R. H. C., *King Stephen*, (London: Longman, 1977)
- Duggan, Anne J., 'Eystein, Thomas Becket, and the Wider Christian World' in *Erkebiskop Eystein – Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed., Kristin Bjørlykke, Øystein Ekroll, Birgitta Syrstad Gran and Marianne Herman (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), pp. 27-43
- Erickson, Carolly, *The Medieval Vision: essays in history and Perception*, (Oxford, 1976)
- Flint, John T., 'The Secularization of Norwegian Society', *Comparative Studies in*

*Society and History*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Apr., 1964)

Garnett, George, *Conquered England: Kingship, Succession, and Tenure, 1066-1166*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)

Garnett, George, 'Coronation and Propaganda: Some Implications of the Norman Claim to the Throne of England in 1066: The Alexander Prize Essay', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 36 (1986)

Garnett, George, "'Franci et Angli': the legal distinctions between peoples after the Conquest", *Anglo-Norman Studies VIII*, ed. R. Allen Brown (Woodbridge, 1986)

Gillingham, John, 'Writing the Biography of Roger of Howden, King's Clerk and Chronicler', in *Writing Medieval Biography. Essays in honour of Frank Barlow*, ed. David Bates, Julia Crick and Sarah Hamilton (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006)

Given-Wilson, Chris and Alice Curteis, *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England*, (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995)

Gunnes, Erik, 'Erkebiskop Øystein som lovgiver' in *Nye middelalderstudier: Kongedømme, kirke, stat*, ed. Claus Krag and Jørn Sandnes (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1983), pp. 94-109

Gunnes, Erik, *Erkebiskop Øystein: Statsmann og kirkebygger* (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1996)

Gunnes, Erik, *Kongemakt og ære: Kongemakt og kirke i 'En tale mot biskopene'* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1971)

Hallan, Nils, 'Replik til Vegard Skånland', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 41 (1961)

Helle, Knut, 'Tendenser i nyere norsk høymiddelalderforskning', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 40 (1960)

Helle, Knut, *Aschehougs Norges historie, Under kirke og kongemakt 1130-1350*, vol. 3 (Oslo: Aschehoug, 1995)

- Helle, Knut, *Konge og gode menn i norsk riksstyring ca. 1150-1319* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1972)
- Helle, Knut, *Norge blir en stat 1130-1319: Handbok i Norges historie bind 1 del 3* (Bergen: Universitetsforlaget, 1964)
- Helle, Knut, 'The Norwegian kingdom: succession disputes and consolidation in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia, Vol. 1 Prehistory to 1520*, ed. Knut Helle, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Hertzberg, Ebbe, 'Den første norske Kongekroning, dens Aarstal og ledsagende Omstændigheter' HT 18 (1905)
- Hocart, A. M., *Kingship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969)
- Holmsen, Andreas 'Erkebiskop Eystein og tronfølgeoven av 1163', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 44 (1965)
- Imsen, Steinar, 'Erkebiskop Øystein som politiker' in *Eystein Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed. Kristin Bjørlykke, Øystein Ekroll, Birgitta Syrstad Gran and Marianne Herman (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), pp. 11-27
- Iversen, Gunilla, 'Transforming a Viking into a Saint', in *The Divine Office in the Latin Middle Ages. Methodology and Source Studies, Regional Developments, Hagiography*, ed., Margot E. Fassler and Rebecca A. Baltzer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Jochens, Jenny M., 'The Politics of Reproduction: Medieval Norwegian Kingship', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Apr., 1987)
- Johannesson, Kurt, *Saxo Grammaticus: Komposition och världsbild i Gesta Danorum* (Stockholm, 1978)
- Johnsen, Arne Odd, 'Opprettelsen av den norske kirkeprovins', in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), pp. 77-93

- Johnsen, Arne Odd, *Fra ættesamfunn til statssamfunn* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug & Co. (W. Nygaard), 1948)
- Johnsen, Arne Odd, *Kong Sverre og England 1199-1202* (Oslo, 1970)
- Johnsen, Arne Odd, *Studier vedrørende kardinal Nicolaus Brekespears legasjon til norden* (Oslo: Fabritius & Sønners forlag, 1945)
- Jordan, William Chester, *Europe in the High Middle Ages*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001)
- Kern, Fritz, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages: Translated with an introduction by S. B. Chrimes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970)
- Kershaw, Paul J. E., *Peaceful Kings: Peace, Power, and the Early Medieval Political Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)
- King, Edmund, *King Stephen*, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010)
- Koht, Halvdan, 'Hendingsgang og tidsrekning i kongstida til Magnus Erlingsson 1161-1177', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 40 (1960)
- Koht, Halvdan, 'Magnus Erlingssons privilegie-brev for Nidaros-kyrka', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 41 (1961)
- Krag, Claus, 'Skikkethet og arv i tronfølgeoven av 1163', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 54 (1975)
- Krag, Claus, 'The early unification of Norway', in *The Cambridge History of Scandinavia volume 1: Prehistory to 1520*, ed., Knut Helle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)
- Krag, Claus, *Norges historie fram til 1319* (Oslo, Universitetsforlaget, 2000)
- Langslet, Lars Roar, *Våre konger: En vei gjennom norgeshistorien* (Oslo: J. W. Cappelens Forlag, 2002)
- Latowsky, Anne A., *Emperor of the World: Charlemagne and the Construction of Imperial Authority, 800-1229* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2013)

Leach, H. G., *Angevin Britain and Scandinavia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921)

Lewis, Andrew W., 'Suger's Views on Kingship', in Paula Lieber Gerson (ed.) *Abbot Suger and Saint-Denis: A Symposium* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987)

Luscombe, D. E., 'Introduction: the formation of political thought in the west', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval Political Thought c. 350-c.1450*, ed., J. H. Burns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991)

Malmros, Rikke, 'Blodgildet i Roskilde historiografiskt belyst', *Scandia*, 45 (1979)

Mason, Emma, *Norman Kingship* (Bangor: Headstart History, 1991)

Maxwell Woolley, Reginald, *Coronation Rites*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915)

McKitterick, Rosamond, *The Frankish Kingdoms under the Carolingians 751-987* (London: Longman, 1983)

Mortensen, Lars Boje, 'Eystein and *Passio Olavi*: author, editor or project leader?', in *Eystein Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed., Kristin Bjørlykke, Øystein Ekroll, Birgitta Syrstad Gran and Marianne, (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), pp. 77-87

Norton, Christopher, 'Archbishop Eystein, King Magnus and the Copenhagen Psalter – A New Hypothesis' in *Eystein Erlendsson – Erkebiskop, politiker og kirkebygger*, ed., Kristin Bjørlykke, Øystein Ekroll, Birgitta Syrstad Gran and Marianne Herman (Trondheim: Nidaros Domkirkes Restaureringsarbeiders forlag, 2012), pp. 185-217

O'Brien, Emily L., *The Cult of St. Edward the Confessor*, (Oxford, 2001)

O'Brien, Bruce, *God's Peace & King's Peace: The Laws of Edward the Confessor*, (Philadelphia, 1999)



- O'Brien, Bruce, 'Legal Treatises as Perception of Law', in *King Stephen's Reign (1135-1154)*, ed. Paul Dalton and Graeme J. White, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008)
- Orning, Hans Jacob, 'Borgerkrig og statsutvikling i Norge i middelalderen – en revurdering', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 93 (2014)
- Paasche, Fredrik, 'Magnus Erlingsson kongedømme', in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969)
- Pennington, Kenneth, *The Prince and the Law 1200-1600: Sovereignty and Rights in the Western Legal Tradition* (Berkeley; Los Angeles; Oxford: University of California Press, 1993)
- Rex, Peter, *King & Saint: The Life of Edward the Confessor*, (Stroud: The History Press, 2008)
- Ridyard, Susan J., *The Royal Saints of Anglo-Saxon England: a study of West Saxon and East Anglian cults*, (Cambridge, 1988)
- Sandaaker, Odd, 'Magnus Erlingssons kroning: ein "politiserande" sagatradisjon?', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 77 (1998)
- Sawyer, Birgit and Peter, *Medieval Scandinavia: from Conversion to Reformation, circa 800-1500* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993)
- Sawyer, Birgit, 'Valdemar, Absalon and Saxo: Historiography and Politics in Medieval Denmark', *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 63 (1985)
- Baxter, Stephen, 'Edward the Confessor and Succession Question' in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*, ed. Richard Mortimer, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2009)
- Scholz, Bernhard W., 'The Canonization of Edward the Confessor', *Speculum*, 36 (1961)
- Schreiner, Johan, 'Love og tronfølgen i Norge 1163-1273' in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969)

- Sigurdsson, Jon Vidar, *Det norrøne samfunnet: Vikingen, kongen, erkebiskopen og bonden* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 2008)
- Sjöström, M., 'Scandinavian medieval descendants of Charlemagne: A detailed genealogy of the issue of Agnes Haakonsdottir, of the so-called Fairhair dynasty', *Foundations - Journal of the Foundation for Medieval Genealogy* vol 2 (2007: 4. July), pp. 253-276
- Skaadel, Jardar and Sven Erik Skarsbø, *Norske kongar og regentar: Frå Harald Hårfagre til Harald 5* (Oslo: Det Norske Samlaget, 1998)
- Skånland, Vegard, 'Erkebiskop Eystein og kroningen i Ringsted 1170', *Historisk Tidsskrift (Norsk)*, 41 (1961)
- Skovgaard-Petersen, Inge, 'Saxo som samtidshistoriker. Det skånske oprør', *Scandia*, 56 (1990)
- Steinsland, Gro, *Den hellige kongen. Om religion og herskermakt fra vikingtid til middelalder* (Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S, 2000)
- Stenton, Doris M., 'Roger of Howden and Benedict', *English Historical Review*, 68 (1953)
- Stringer, Keith J., *The Reign of Stephen: Kingship, Warfare and Government in Twelfth-Century England*, (London: Routledge, 1993)
- Strohm, Paul, *England's Empty Throne: Usurpation and the Language of Legitimation 1399-1422* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998)
- Tamm, Ditlev 'How Nordic are the Old Nordic Laws' in *How Nordic are the Nordic Medieval Laws? Proceedings from the first Carlsberg Conference on Medieval Legal History, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.*, ed. Per Andersen, Ditlev Tamm and Helle Vogt (Copenhagen: DJØF Publishing, 2011), pp. 5-21
- Taranger, Absalon, 'Kong Magnus Erlingssons privilegium for den norske kirke' *Norvegia Sacra* 2 (1922)

- Tobiassen, Torfinn, 'Tronfølgelov og privilegiebrev', in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969)
- Turner, Ralph V., *King John: England's Evil King?* (Stroud: History Press, 2009)
- Turville-Petre, Joan, 'The Genealogist and History: Ari to Snorri', *Saga-book vol. XX. The Viking Society for Northern Research* (University College London 1978-1981)
- Ugulen, Jo Rune, 'Kongar i dei norske ættetavlene', *Norsk Slekthistorisk Forening* 1999/2000, reprinted from *Genealogen* 99.1, pp. 20-23
- Ullman, Walter, *The Carolingian Renaissance and the Idea of Kingship. The Birkbeck Lectures 1968-9* (London: Methuen & Co Ltd, 1969)
- Vandvik, Eirik, 'Magnus Erlingssons kroningseid', in *Samfunnsmaktene brytes*, ed. Andreas Holmsen and Jarle Simensen (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1969), pp. 197-207
- Vandvik, Eirik, *Magnus Erlingssons privilegiebrev og kongevigsle* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1962)
- Warren, W. L., *The Governance of Norman and Angevin England 1086-1272*, (London, 1987)
- Weibull, Curt, 'Saxos berättelser om de danska vendertågen 1158-85', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Dansk), 83 (1983), 35-70
- Weibull, Curt, 'Vem var Saxo', *Historisk Tidsskrift* (Dansk), 78 (1978)
- Wellendorf, Jonas, "'Ancient Traditions" in *Sverris saga*: The Background of an Episode in *Sverris saga* and a Note on the Dating of *Rómverja saga*', *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. 113, No. 1 (2014)
- White, Graeme J., *Restoration and Reform, 1153-1165: Recovery From Civil War in England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

## Online sources

Arstad, Knut Peter Lyche (2009.13.02) 'Nikolas Skjaldvorsson', Norsk biografisk leksikon, [https://nbl.snl.no/Nikolas\\_Skjaldvorsson](https://nbl.snl.no/Nikolas_Skjaldvorsson)

Bratberg, Terje. (2013.12.29), 'Ynglingeætten', *Store norske leksikon*  
<https://snl.no/Ynglinge%C3%A6tten>

Myklebust, Bjarne Andre, ed., 'Arne på Stodrheim' *NRK Sogn og Fjordane Fylkesleksikon*, 2008, [http://www.nrk.no/sf/leksikon/index.php/Arne\\_på\\_Stodrheim](http://www.nrk.no/sf/leksikon/index.php/Arne_på_Stodrheim)

Saxo Grammaticus *Danmarks Krønike*, ed. Frederik Winkel Horn, (København, 1898) [http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar\\_den\\_store](http://www.heimskringla.no/wiki/Valdemar_den_store)

Storm, Gustav and Bugge, Alexander (trans.) *Norges Kongesager Vol. 3*, Kristiania: I.M. Stenersens Forlag, 1914 [http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Sverres\\_saga](http://heimskringla.no/wiki/Sverres_saga)

Thuesen, Nils Petter (2009.13.02), 'Ingerid Ragnvaldsdatter' *Norsk biografisk leksikon*, [https://nbl.snl.no/Ingerid\\_Ragnvaldsdatter](https://nbl.snl.no/Ingerid_Ragnvaldsdatter)

Magerøy, Hallvard. (2009.02.14). 'Fagrskinna' *Store norske leksikon*  
<https://snl.no/Fagrskinna>

Brathetland, Bente Opheim (2009. 02.13) 'Håkon 2 Sigurdsson Herdebrei' *Norsk biografisk leksikon*. [https://nbl.snl.no/H%C3%A5kon\\_2\\_Sigurdsson\\_Herdebrei](https://nbl.snl.no/H%C3%A5kon_2_Sigurdsson_Herdebrei)

Per Bjørn Halvorsen, ed., (2009.02.14.) 'Peterspenger', *Store norske leksikon*,  
<https://snl.no/peterspenger>